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THREE HUNDRED OUTLINES

OF

SERMONS ON THE NEW TESTAMENT.



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THREE HUNDRED OUTLINES ON THE NEW TESTAMENT.

- . **The Name of Jesus.** MATT. i. 21. "*Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.*"

ALMOST every historic person in the Bible bears an appropriate name; thus the name came to be identified with the person. In this text the name Jesus is declared to be descriptive of the person and the work of Christ.

I. Let me call your attention to the Saviour. Jesus signifies, Jehovah that saves. So Jesus is Divine: He saves His people from their sins. Not the word, not the ordinances, but Jesus Himself.

II. Look at the salvation.

1. Jesus saves from sin by bestowing forgiveness—full forgiveness, free, immediate, and irreversible.

2. Jesus saves His people from the pollution of sin; not from their sins, but from their sins. It is true that holiness is progressive, but the Christian cannot and does not love sin. Nor can he live in sin as the choice and habit of his life. This salvation shall be completed in heaven.

III. Let us look at the saved. "He shall save His people." Who are His people? They must have been at one time in their sins. Therefore no one need despair. But does not the phrase speak of election? and how do we know that I am elected?" Your business is not with election but with your calling, and you may make your calling sure by believing. Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish. "Whosoever!" Every one feels that it includes him. "Whosoever believeth;" does that include you?

W. M. T.

II. The Birth of Christ. MATT. i. 22, 23. *"Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child."*

MANY readers of the Bible must have been struck by St. Matthew's reason for the occurrences connected with Christ's birth. It would have seemed more natural to say that the prophecy existed for the sake of the event than the event for the sake of the prophecy. There were other reasons for the birth of Jesus of a virgin mother, but one reason was this, that it was foretold on Divine authority. St. Matthew's plan throughout his Gospel is to show that the life of Jesus in all particulars corresponded to what Jewish prophecy had said about the Messiah.

I. The importance of the event to which Isaiah looks forward, and which the evangelist describes as fulfilled.

1. The occurrence was of preternatural character. The birth of Christ is often discussed now as the birth of a great man, but without reference to the virginity of his mother, as if it were not of importance. It is necessary to say plainly that the account in the Gospel is true or false: if false it ought to be repudiated by every honest man as baseless superstition; if true, as we Christians believe, then it is a very momentous truth. To raise us from degradation, Christ must Himself be sinless. Evil had descended from generation to generation like a torrent, ever since Adam by transgression fell, and the millions of mankind had ever to say with David, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity." How was this fatal entail to be cut off? The virgin birth was the answer.

2. Christ's birth marked the entrance into the sphere of sense and time of One who had existed from eternity.

3. No other birth has ever involved such important consequences to the human race. Who of all the greatest of mankind has left behind him a work comparable with that achieved by Jesus? What was the empire of Alexander, or of Cæsar when compared to that of Christ? Theirs were transient and limited; Christ's is lasting and ever extending. The institutions which make life tolerable to the suffering classes—such as hospitals—all date from Jesus Christ, and from the promulgation of His teaching.

the position of woman in Christian society is due not only to our Lord's teaching, but to the circumstances of His birth. The incarnation of Jesus was a bridge across the chasm which parted earth and heaven.

II. The contrast between the real and the apparent importance of Christ's birth. The kingdom of God had entered into history without observation. That birth-place Bethlehem seemed commonplace enough. Cæsar's place seemed to be more important to the world than the manger. The apparent is not always the real.

III. What is the practical meaning of this birth to us, and what relation have we to Him who, for love of us, was born of the virgin?

H. P. L.

I. **The Star in the East.** MATT. ii. 1, 2. "*Behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east and are come to worship Him.*"

THIS visit of the wise men shows us:—

I. How variously God speaks to us—how many are the voices whereby He calls us, if we will, out of darkness, whether of mind or of heart, into His marvellous light. He uses a language to each which each can understand. These men were probably from Parthia, and under Divine guidance, clearly miraculous, they were led to the manger at Bethlehem. Truly it has been said that man can more easily understand the infinite magnificence of God than the depths of His loving condescension. We, in our narrowness constantly prescribe conditions for Him, under which alone we think souls can be brought to know and love Him. He may seem to violate our narrow rules, but He has a larger heart than those rules allow for, and the day will come when we, too, shall understand Him. The universal Father sooner or later during our brief period of existence here has a word, a star, for all of us.

II. How truth, if it is to be grasped in its fulness, must earnestly sought for. These wise men had a little stock of truth to start with, but they made the most of that which had been given them. They studied till they saw the

star. They persevered until they actually found. It is the law of God's kingdom to the end of time: "He that hath to him shall be given, he that hath not from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." God gives to all the necessary light at some time, and if we follow it it will lead us on. Some word, some example, some passing inward inspiration, may be the star in the East, bidding the soul hope and persevere. And everything depends on the fact of that soul's perseverance.

III. This history teaches us what is the real object of religious enquiry. "We have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him." Worship is the joint result of thought, affection, and will rising upward towards God and then shrinking into the very dust before Him. It is much more than mere religious thought; it is the soul seeking the true centre of the spiritual universe with all its powers. In the worship of the Eastern sages there was reverent outward homage, and also the practical proof of their sincerity in their gifts.

H. P. L.

IV. Mercy. MATT. v. 7. "*Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.*"

THIS beatitude implies that mankind are not naturally merciful, or, at least, that they are imperfectly so. There is something strange in that; for if there is one quality we ascribe to humanity more than another it is this of mercy. We say of an unkind and cruel action, that it is inhuman, by which we imply that there is something in humanity that abhors it. The words would not seem so strange to us if we could throw ourselves back to that cruel time. But is it true that we need mercy yet?

I. Are we wanting in this grace of mercy? Let us compare ourselves with God. God's mercy is unchanging, ours is fitful. God's mercy is provident, it is a thoughtful mercy; our mercy, even in the most benevolent, capricious and not sufficiently thoughtful.

II. How may we hope to have this mercy supplied to us? In the redemption of the fallen world by the Son of God we see this thoughtful, this universal, this provident

mercy unblurred by a single confusing line. Surely, we may say, we have need of supernatural grace to make us as merciful.

III. Are we merciful in our judgment of others? Are we merciful in our speech to men? Do we not sometimes take pleasure in making a criticism as sharp and as pungent as we can make it? Are we merciful in our consideration of others? Are we merciful as employers of others? Surely there is a sad want of thoughtful mercy among us.

W. C. M.

The Christian Motive. MATT. v. 11. "*For My sake.*"

THE words specially bring before us the relation of the Christian to his living and loving Lord.

I. Let us seek to get a clearer view of the influence of the Christian motive.

The Lord Jesus has certain special and peculiar claims on us.

There is the authority of His Godhead, and the love of His incarnation and death.

II. Let us seek to get a juster estimate of its range.

1. It bears with full force on our efforts after personal holiness.

2. It bears with great effect on the Christian's work for others.

3. The principle extends to the enduring of suffering for conscience sake.

4. It applies with great force to the sacrifices we are required to make.

This principle has a testing power in it which will reveal whether or not we are as we profess to be, the followers of Christ.

W. M. T.

I. A City set on a Hill. MATT. v. 14. "*A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.*"

CHRISTIANS must be, to a certain extent, the light of the world before they can be its salt. They must illuminate

it before they can save it from its corruptions. The startling assertion of our Lord to the company of Galilean peasants, "Ye are the light of the world," implies the duty "Let your light so shine before men."

In the proverb, "A city set on a hill cannot be hid," it implies that whether His disciples will it or not, they cannot help, in their corporate capacity as His Church, living much before the eyes of men in the full glare of public life. Now of these two figures, the hill suggests an elevation above all merely human institutions of the city, defensive walls without, and life, movement, organization within. There are other sayings of our Lord with which, at first sight, this doctrine of the publicity of His Church appears to be at variance. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." "The kingdom of God is within you." A chief reason for this visible publicity is that by it the Church of Christ challenges the attention of men to the claims of Christ. Its real strength and beauty are undoubtedly within, but its outward form and being are a proclamation of the great King, which all men more or less intelligently decipher for themselves.

This publicity is also characteristic of the lives of the Church's great servants and missionaries. What a public life was St. Paul's! He could say at an early date of his career, "From Jerusalem even round about unto Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."

H. P. L.

VII. The Christian's Light. MATT. v. 16. "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*"

CHRIST, the Light of the world, says to His followers, "Ye are the light of the world." There is no real discrepancy between the two statements: the city is lit by lamps and yet it is the gas that lightens it.

I. There is first the positive injunction that Christians are to do everything in their power to secure that their light shall shine as brightly as possible. This is to be done:—

1. By the position we take up A lamp on the floor

will not send out its rays so widely as if it were suspended from the ceiling. The Christian should connect himself with the Church, let his light shine by joining the company of those who confess with their mouths the Lord Jesus.

2. By the character which we form. Character is the most important thing in the world. There is no eloquence so powerful as a good man's life.

3. By the exertions we make for the conversion of our fellow men. By these we benefit ourselves; let a man tie up his hand so that it becomes motionless, and by and by it will become withered and powerless like the limb of an Indian devotee.

II. Look at the negative side of this injunction. We should remove everything that tends either to obscure or to hide our light, or which so affects it as to make it suggestive of ourselves rather than of God.

1. We should get rid of the undue reserve by which multitudes are characterized.

2. We must keep ourselves clear from all practical inconsistencies.

3. We should avoid all self display. The best style in writing is that which gives the thought with such transparency that the reader sees nothing else; and that is the noblest Christian character which shows the most of Christ.

W. M. T.

VIII. Christ not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

MATT. V. 17. *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."*

THIS is one of those sayings of our Lord which exhibit His enormous personal pretensions," which from any man's lips would have been blasphemy and intolerable impertinence. Prophets always appealed to the law of God as their authority; but Christ speaks as if He needed no higher authority for His mission than His own.

Twice over He says "I am come," as if to place Himself far above all prophets that were ever "sent of God."

I. The greatness of the assumption here made by Christ: "I am not come to destroy but to fulfil." Taking the fulfilment of the law to mean the rendering to it an absolute

and faultless obedience, Christ first asserts his own sinlessness. He declares He had come to render a full and perfect obedience to the law of God. But He came to fulfil the law also by completing and explaining its moral and disciplinary training. The law is unintelligible without Christ. He asserts His own power and right to "fill out" the law and the prophets, throwing new life on both, taking the letter of the law and expanding it into richer spiritual significance, making men feel that God's command was "exceeding broad." Christ accepts the prophecies of the Old Testament as Divine, and points to Himself as their fulfilment.

II. These words of Jesus reveal to us the historical continuity of Christianity. It was founded on a great and glorious past, of which it was the Divine development. To destroy Christianity it is not enough to get rid of the miracle of Gospel history; you must also destroy the history of the Jewish Church.

III. These words teach us the permanent authority of all the moral principles of the Jewish law. One might as well ask if the authority of conscience is still to be recognised by Christian men, as ask whether the moral law of Judaism is still binding on the Church. Nothing that is moral can ever be destroyed. We do not need the light of stars when the sun is risen; but the stars are shining still.

G. S. B.

IX. The Righteousness of the Pharisees. MATTHEW

v. 20. *"Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."*

THE sermon on the Mount may be regarded as Jesus Christ's first formal public announcement of the nature and object of His mission, and of the relation of His Gospel both to the law of Moses and to the religious parties then existing among the Jews. The text is the centre of this unrivalled and unapproachable discourse.

The "kingdom of heaven" here, as elsewhere, in the Gospels, designates that spiritual society which Jesus came on earth to found.

When it is alleged that "righteousness" is essential to entrance into this kingdom, we are not to suppose that the use of its possession a man merits admission into the kingdom, but rather that righteousness is the one essential characteristic of all connected with the kingdom. The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was at fault, because they placed righteousness in what a man does, irrespective of what he is, and though practising many virtues which might be called virtues, yet they did so from selfish and outside considerations. The results which sprang from this false principle, were:—

The divorce of religion from common life.

The overlaying of the spirit of God's law by the letter.

I. Ostentation in the performance of their so-called religious duties, with its invariable accompaniment in the unfavorable judgment of others.

Thus Pharisaism is a form of righteousness that is not found among us.

The disgraces and defeats of the Church are owing in great part to the Pharisees nominally connected with her. Like the barnacles on a ship, which are not in it but on it, they impede her progress and give occasion to the enemies of the Church to blaspheme.

W. M. T.

Thy will be done. MATT. vi. 13. *"Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."*

The chief meaning of this petition is not that we should suffer, but that we should act. With very earnest and firm resolve we should set ourselves upon doing that which our consciences tell us God would have us to do. But we should consider, first, its bearing upon suffering.

Though this is a part of the meaning of the petition, it is but a small part. God has so constituted the world as to make trouble to form part of our common lot, falling upon us but lightly and at distant intervals, and visiting us blow upon blow until their hearts are bowed down and overclouded with sorrow. Our reason tells us that to submit to God's law is wise. But when our own turn comes to suffer, our will rises against God, and it is faith

only that can make us say, "Thy will be done,"—faith in God's love, in Christ's salvation, and in the promised glory of Christ's kingdom.

II. The more important meaning of the petition is "Thy will be done" actively by us, by our earnestly setting ourselves to live a life of faith. This is the more important for two reasons—first, because it is the true meaning of the petition, not "Thy will be endured," but "Thy will be done;" and, further, it is to be done as in heaven. Because there is no suffering in heaven. Besides, the doing of God's will includes the bearing of it as the cause includes the effect.

All we can do is by the grace of God. To obtain this grace we must pray.

III. God's will must not only be done, but done in His will. How this is to be is to be seen by our Lord's example. That is the hardest thing of all—to do God's will, because our natures have been transformed, all selfishness and a earthly longing removed, and the image of God once again restored in our defiled and sin-corrupted breasts.

R. P. S.

XI. God's Providential Care. MATT. vi.

"Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not more clothe you, O ye of little faith."

OUR Lord is insisting on the duty of leaving cares about food and dress trustfully and unreservedly in the loving hands of God. His followers, He hints, may just as well be Gentiles at once, if they are to spend their energy upon such cares as these. Our Lord, to warrant this trust and confidence, reveals God as a Father, a revelation which assures at once of His power and His love. In dealing with this subject our Lord argues from the less to the greater. If He feels so much interest in the lower forms of life, He must feel a much greater interest in the sum of the visible creation—man. This doctrine of the particular providential care of God for man runs throughout the Old Testament. Against this general truth that man

generally, and God's servants in particular, are the objects of His care, there are one or two objections made and argued:—

That such a conception of the world and of life is unscientific, and belongs to the infancy of human thought. The reign of fixed laws is an established certainty; and, if not recognised, is fatal to the idea of a particular providence. But why is the idea of law inconsistent with that of a father's care and government? A father does not govern one whit the less because he governs by rule. God's government is seen in a rule of universal law, and in the order of government. If God be really free in His action, so that He can, if He wills, innovate upon His action, then in fact that law is the general principle of His government; and there is nothing inconsistent with His fatherly providence. He does not clothe the lilies one whit the less because the mysterious laws of growth are everywhere the same. It is asked,—

Is not belief in God's protecting providence dishonourable to God Himself? Can the Ruler of the spheres be concerned with providing us with food and clothing? To say that God is too great for this looks like reverence. But this reverence would fain bow God out of His own throne, and enhance His majesty at the expense of His providence. It is asked again,—

I. If such a doctrine does not threaten the moral well-being of man with serious dangers, such as a listless waiting-upon events, or, making God's service a mercenary service? No belief in His loving care can impair the desire of noble souls to seek and serve Him for His own sake.

Faith in this case is the very spirit and nerve of religion.

H. P. L.

The Kingdom First. MATT. vi. 33. "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.*"

It is a part of the confusion with which our world is afflicted, that the order of things has been inverted. The right order of right things is often the most serious of evils. A disproportionate truth is the worst of error. Therefore we

are expressly told that one feature in the restored world will be that "the last will be first, and the first will last!" One of the greatest purposes of Divine truth is to re-establish the series, to tell us which is to be first, which is to be second.

This text is an instance of one of these rectifying human calculation.

I. The promise given here to those who treat religion as the first object of life. The promise which God attaches to any duty is not therefore to be made the motive why that duty is done. The only motive with which we are to do anything is the glory of God. An objection made against this promise of God is, that by securing to every Christian, as a consequence of his piety, a supply of worldly wants, an inducement to indolence in a man's business appears to be held out. But the man most earnest about his soul is always the man who is most earnest about everything.

The poor man who is tempted to think that God has not been faithful to His promises in his case has not read this text aright. He has been fed and clothed, and that is no more promised in the context. God promises clothing and feeding.

II. Whatever be the engagements of life let it be remembered that there is a prior one.

In every matter there are a thousand littlenesses to disturb and to warp the soul. But in every matter there is God, judgment and eternity. With these first you must be occupied.

III. Let no one think that this world and the next are two things, so that what is good for the one is unprofitable for the other.

If this present world were all, still the most religious stand in the vantage.

Give the promise of life to God, and let that which is furthest in time be the nearest in intention, and so the little space which lies between this moment and heaven will be all arched over with this promise: "All these things shall be added unto you."

I. Prayer. MATT. vii. 8. *"Ask and it shall be given unto you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. Every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."*

These three words—ask, seek, and knock, are all used to describe the one act or habit of prayer.

We have in these words not a formal definition of prayer, but an incidental definition of prayer, and a most complete definition. To pray to God is to ask of God. Many persons praying spend much time in telling God what they are and what they are not. They also, very properly, acknowledge God's goodness. That is right, but not prayer. Sometimes it is well to go to God and say nothing to God about myself except "our Father," and simply ask.

II. We have a recognition of the hindrances that we sometimes meet in prayer. God is sometimes nigh, then ask; sometimes He seems far, then seek; sometimes He is enshrined and heaven seems as brass, then knock; sometimes the blessings we want are visible in God's hands, then ask; sometimes they are hid in God's treasures, then seek; sometimes they are deposited as in holy places, then knock.

III. There is here a positive injunction. Prayer is not optional; it is a great privilege, it is a duty.

IV. Christ stimulates to obedience by words of encouragement. He calls attention to universal experience. The one who calls may be like a publican, but *every one*. If every one, why not you? Further, He points to the conduct of parents towards their children, and gives force to the illustration by a gentle reference to our common gravity. Though gentle it is most forcible. I know nothing about our sinfulness in Scripture that so touches the heart as this "being evil." The very incidental nature of the recognition of our sinfulness shows how constantly we are before Christ, and how much He thought of it. The order is that our wickedness has not become so triumphant as to prevent the Father giving bread or fish.

S. M.

XIV. A Miracle of Healing. MATT. ix. 6. "*that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith He to the sick of the palsy) Arise, and get up thy bed.*"

THE general groove of Christ's miracles was that He dressed Himself first to the body and afterwards to the soul. In this miracle He had regard to the soul first. In an apparently indiscriminate order of Christ's procedure in this matter, we like to see how body and soul are equally dear to God ; and that they, therefore, are wrong who hold a religious thing to think much of the spiritual wants, and irreligious to pay great attention to our bodily infirmities. To Him they are alike. This is a thought very pleasant and important to the sick, the weary and the weak.

I. A temporal mercy was made the evidence and sign of a spiritual one. May we not safely take the same line of thought, and reason thus of some great earthly blessing granted us. Would God have given me this, and not given me the pardon of my sins ? The very best use we can make of any kind of providence in outward things, is to accept it as a mark that God loves and has mercy upon our souls. The inference is a fair one, supposing a man to have no anxiety about his soul which makes him wish for pardon.

II. The power which is given to Christ as "The Son of man," to forgive sins. There is beautiful justice in the fact that He who purchased the pardon should be the one to whom it is permitted to have the joy of giving it. The Church claims and knows no absolving power. It merely points the finger to Christ, and says "He does all ; the Son of man, He alone, hath power on earth to forgive sins."

Let every man beware how he trespass on that exclusive prerogative of the Son of Man.

III. In those words "on earth" there is a promise that as long as this earth shall last that unwearied Presence is with us.

Jesus will always be here to do His own forgiving work for "the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." Then why should there be any man unforgiven when relief is so close. There is no medicine, even for the body like the quiet of a mind that is at peace with God.

"The leaves of that tree are for the healing of the nations."

V. The Mutual Confession of Christ and His Disciples. MATT. x. 32. "*Whosoever, therefore, shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven.*"

FAMILIAR words these, but very wonderful words. How astonished should we be if we heard these words from the lips of another. Is there is another being who could dare speak thus?

To confess, as in the text, is to speak openly of anything according to its true character.

We have in this passage two confessions.

I. The confessing of Christ by men.

Before we can speak openly of Christ according to His true character we must know Him and we must appreciate Him. Knowledge and appreciation are both essential to His confession.

This confession is variously made. Sometimes it is a verbal acknowledgment of Christ. Sometimes Christ may be dishonoured by our speaking of Him with our mouths; and we require wisdom and prudence and the exercising of judgment in this matter.

Again, Jesus Christ is confessed by the observance of His ordinances. In baptism we especially confess the Holy Spirit, in the Lord's supper we confess the Saviour. How is it that some who really do live by faith on the Son of God still neglect this sacrament?

Christ is confessed by the recognition of His disciples and servants, specially of such as most represent Him—the children of sorrow.

Jesus Christ is confessed by the worship of His holy name.

Christ is confessed by the endurance of shame and persecution for His sake.

Finally, He is confessed by living to Him and living for Him.

II. The confessing of men by Jesus Christ.

The two are connected.

The confessing of men by Christ is both present and future. Now men are confessed by His providences and the ministry of His Spirit. Then He will openly confess them before His Father and the assembled world.

This recognition is full and complete both now and hereafter.

There are two practical lessons.

1. Secret discipleship can never fulfil our duties or exhaust our obligations.

2. The trials involved in the confession of Christ are light and momentary compared with the weight of the reward.

S. M.

XVI. Looking for Another Christ. MATT. xi.

"Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

THE question does not imply any failure of faith in Christ; it implies a doubt whether the true nature of the purpose and work of Christ had been perfectly understood. The fact that John should have sent to Christ Himself to resolve the doubt, shows that his faith in Christ was unshaken. There are times when, through the disappointments and failures of our personal religious lives, it may be necessary to look for another Christ than the Christ we have already known.

I. There are some who have been restless for months, perhaps for years, about their sin. They have appealed to Christ again and again, and the peace of Christ has not come to them. They are tempted to put this question to Christ: "May I look for another Christ?" Christ may reply, by pointing them to the great triumph of His mercy with which they are surrounded. Go to Christ with all your trouble and with a clear and vivid remembrance of His death, and you cannot put this question.

II. Some feel that their Christian life, has not had the power and brightness they hoped for. This also often arises from a defective knowledge of Christ. Perhaps you have forgotten that Christ is not only a Saviour but a Prince, and that you must accept His law as the rule for your life, and strive to get His will done on earth as the will of God is done in heaven.

III. This question may be suggested by the general condition and history of the world. A large part of the world is still unsaved. The misery Jesus came to console remains largely unconsolated. Do you look for another Christ? Can the contents of His revelation be any other?

enriched? Can there be more careful warnings, more glorious promises, more compassion, more gentleness and beauty, than we have seen?

IV. We do not look for the coming of another Christ, but the Christ whom we know will come in another form, to complete in power and majesty the work which He began in weakness and in shame.

R. W. D.

XVII. The Gospel to the Poor. MATT. xi. 5. "*The poor have the gospel preached to them.*"

THESE words are part of a message sent by Christ to one who was beginning to be offended in Him. His answer to the Baptist's question, "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" is twofold. He bids His disciples tell John of His works and of His word, of His miracles, and of His teaching. "Tell John the things ye see and hear." They were to tell of the word as well as of the wonders. And the word is the everlasting gospel of the Son of God, that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." But our Lord speaks of one special characteristic of this gospel. It is a gospel for the poor.

I. No other system has any good news for the poor. Poverty is only another word for human imperfection and weakness. Human life is a life of struggle with nature. This is no modern discovery, but as old as the first chapter of Genesis: "Replenish the earth, and subdue it." And in this subduing of the earth the strong thrust aside the weak, and we call the strong the rich, and the weak the poor. This is the inevitable law of human society as now constituted. There will always be in the world the Dives and the Lazarus. Christianity claims to be a supernatural kingdom, and in that kingdom it gives the poor man a place and a future.

1. There is no gospel in communism for the poor; it has the sound of good news, but it is a cruel dream of equality of fraternity, that gives you only equality in misery and the fratricidal brotherhood of Cain.

2. There is no gospel for the poor in the teaching of the philosopher. He says that the present state of the poor man is inevitable. It is the working of the great law which

rules all forms of life, the survival of the fittest growth by natural selection. If you blot out the supernatural from the world, these two utterances are all that men have to say to the poor.

II. Christianity has for the poor good news. The present condition of things is not eternal. God has another world in which to redress the inequalities of this, an eternity in which to console the poor. Not only is Christianity the gospel for the poor in the after life, but it has the promise of this life also. It is the gospel of a real brotherhood, because it reveals a real fatherhood, the fatherhood of God in Christ.

This is no less a gospel for the rich. Rich you may live, but you must die a pauper. And in that last supreme moment of poverty and helplessness, the man must turn and cling to the gospel of the poor. "Believe in Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Preach that gospel to the poor; and manifest this gospel by your demeanour towards them. Hasten to close up the yawning gulf between Dives and Lazarus with deeds and words of lovingkindness. Remember the brotherhood in Christ of the poor to you.

W. C. M.

XVIII. Learning of Christ. MATT. xi. 29. "*Learn of Me.*"

JESUS is the Great Teacher, but that will be of no avail unless we are also great learners. We may "learn of," or, as the word means, "from Christ,"—

I. By listening to His direct teachings.

As a teacher Jesus is authoritative. He made statements regarding things—those of the unseen world, for instance—which were to be received because He made them. Yet He never frowned upon inquiry into the truth of what He taught.

II. By contemplating His character we learn of Christ. Teaching by precept and teaching by example has each its place, but the teaching of the latter is the more attractive. In Jesus we see everything that belongs to the ideal excellence of our nature, so that to be Christlike is to be perfect.

III. We learn of Christ from the practical experiences of the Christian life.

To get the full benefit of Christ's teaching, it is not enough that we "sit at His feet and hear His words." There must be the taking up of His yoke, which is easy, and His burden, which is light. There must be the growing like Christ, as well as the gaining of acquaintance with His life. The whole every-day practice of our religion is a constant learning of Christ, just as the constant practice of speaking and writing is the learning of a language.

It is written that "he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow," but the happy effect of "learning of Christ" is that we "find rest to our souls."

W. M.

XIX. The Easy Yoke and the Light Burden.

MATT. xi. 30. "*For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.*"

I. THE yoke of Christ is easy, and His burden is light, because we bear it with the approbation of conscience. A burden which does not consist of sin is never heavy.

II. This yoke is easy because it is borne in love.

III. Christ's yoke is easy and His burden is light because it is borne with the help of the Spirit of God.

IV. Christ's words are true because His burden becomes lighter the longer it is borne.

V. Christ's yoke is easy and His burden light because we are sustained under it by a good hope. Heaven and endless happiness is reserved for us.

W. M. T.

XX. Jonah and Jesus. MATT. xii. 41. "*The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.*"

I. WE are shown that there are different degrees of advantage involving different amounts of responsibility. The Ninevites had scanty advantages, and there is something wonderful in the penitence which sunk their hearts so

suddenly. But consider the abundant privileges that filled the cup of the Jews. From the beginning they had been taught of God. Besides, Jonah was the teacher of the one and Jesus the teacher of the other. God warns the Ninevites by one indolent and condemned prophet; He warns the Jews by His faithful and well-beloved Son. What has prompted us to tell this tale of two cities in your hearing? It is because the vast array of spiritual privilege, greater than ever lighted on any country, has lighted upon you.

II. The solemnity is deepened by the suggestion that reluctant witness-bearing will be heard in the judgment of those least advantaged in condemnation of the greater. Noah is said to condemn the old world because of his consistency and their unbelief. The Saviour accuses the oft-warned Capernaum in the presence of the once-warned Sodom. O this witness of the human against the human! It is sad to be condemned on the testimony of books, but sadder surely to have the guilt manifested by our fellows, whom perhaps on earth we thought "too mean to come between the wind and our nobility."

W. M. P.

XXI. Persuasives to Christ. MATT. xi. 27, 28.

"All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

THE way to be saved is to come to Jesus. I seek to press this invitation by the arguments which the Saviour used.

I. The reason why you are solemnly bidden to come to Christ is because He is the appointed Mediator. "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father."

II. Christ is a well-furnished Mediator. *All things* are delivered.

III. Christ is an inconceivably great Mediator; so great that no one but an infinite God knows Him.

IV. He is an infinitely wise Saviour. He understands both persons on whose behalf He mediates—God and you

V. He is an indispensable Mediator—the only Mediator.
 “No man knoweth the Father save the Son.”

C. H. S.

XXII. Goodly Pearls. MATT. xiii. 46. “One pearl of
great price.”

No heart is at this moment quite vacant, quite listless, quite objectless. We will not speak of men whose goodly pearl is mere thoughtless self-indulgence. But we speak of three goodly pearls, sometimes reflecting, sometimes counterfeiting the pearl of price. Their seekers, we doubt not, are amongst us, and we would speak to them.

I. The pearl of true reality, the thing that is a substance of which there are ten thousand shadows. Is there a goodlier pearl than this in all God's universe? We do not complain of this object of search, but of the method of seeking. How often is the search of truth not a business but a pastime, not a struggle but an excuse. Away with the worship of doubting.

II. Another pearl is the pearl of virtue. Let no man disparage it. God does not, Christ ~~does not~~; but let no man make the pearl a virtue, a thing which looks only at the act, and never enters into the heart, out of which God says are the issues of life. The seeker of the pearl of virtue must listen to what God has to say about it, and be wrapped within the folds of the righteousness of Christ.

III. The goodliest pearl of all to be threaded in this string is the pearl of love. But who can tell the sorrows of the pursuit or the disappointment of the attainment? One loves and the other does not. The cup is dashed from the lips, so the enchantment is gone in the getting. At last death comes, and the final parting. Oh, the merchant seeking this pearl is a very sorrowful man ere all is done. But God is the fountain of love, and offers Himself as its satisfaction. That is the pearl of price.

C. J. V.

But the greatest of these is charity.

XXIII. Mixed Experience. MATT. xiv. 28. *"And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me."*

I. WE have here the mixed character of the believer's experience.

II. Faith loves venturesome service.

III. Faith really does work wonders.

IV. Into the soul of the most confident disciple unbelief generally finds some door or other for entrance.

V. If at any time faith seems to be overturned by an invasion of unbelief, it then shows its true conquering character.

VI. Our Lord Jesus Christ is equally kind, both to strong faith and to little faith

C. H. S.

XXIV. Hear Christ. MATT. xvii. 5. *"Hear ye Him."*

I. WHY should we hear Him?

1. Because God Himself commands us.

2. Because He deserves to be heard.

3. Because the message He has come to communicate concerns our most solemn interests.

4. If He is our master and our Lord, we are bound to hear Him. That is an argument suitable for those who have believed.

II. What are we to hear? The fulness of all revelation is embodied in Himself. As the sound of many waters hear this: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself."

The Lord Jesus has many varieties of utterance; He instructs, He commands, He consoles, He warns.

III. How are we to hear Him?

1. It becomes us to listen with devout reverence.

2. Let us hear believingly. The word of God applied to the soul by the Eternal Spirit is the voice of Christ.

IV. When shall we hear Him? Evermore. When our

Christian career begins, when we greet Him in the upper skies. The great matter, however, is that we hear Him *now*.

C. H. S.

XXV. The Secret of Power. MATT. xvii. 19, 20.

"Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief."

WE have success enough in Christian work to assure us that we possess a treasure, and failures enough to make us feel how weak are the earthen vessels that hold it.

I. We have an unvarying power.

1. We have a Gospel that never can grow old.

2. We have an abiding Spirit.

3. We have a Lord the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

II. The condition of exercising this power is faith. With such a force at our command, a force that could shake the mountains and break the rocks, how can we think of failure? Christ throws the disciples back decisively upon themselves as solely responsible.

We have received all spiritual gifts in proportion to our capacity, and our capacity is mainly settled by our faith.

The same faith has a natural operation upon ourselves which tends to fit us for casting out the evil spirit. It makes us simple, fearless, strong.

Faith has power over men who see it. There is a magnetism in the sight of a brother's faith which few can resist.

III. Our faith is ever threatened by subtle unbelief.

Our activity in spreading the Gospel tends to become mechanical.

The atmosphere of scornful disbelief which surrounds us makes our faith falter. Let us take heed lest we suffer our grasp of our dear Lord's hand to relax for no better reason than because so many have left His side.

IV. Our faith can only be maintained by constant devotion and rigid self-denial. It is no holiday task to cast out devils. Self-indulgent men will never do it.

A. M.

XXVI. Offences. MATT. xviii. 7. *"It must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"*

THIS passage is at once very transparent and very abstruse. A child may understand it, and yet it involves a startling antithesis and a great enigma.

It is a child that is the occasion of this warning. We have all the feebler qualities, if not the nobler characteristics, of a child's nature. We have all some element of weakness which makes us dependent on others. Imitation is the law of the child's nature. And the force of example will always be more potent than the earnest appeals of the preacher and the convincing logic of the apologist. Personal influence is contagious as the atmosphere which envelops us. Hence the category of Christ's little ones is as wide as the Church or mankind. Hence the severity of the language.

Who after eighteen centuries will venture to say that the warning is unneeded? The scandals of Christendom have been far more deadly to the souls of men than the fiercest rage of the persecutor.

Wholesale barbarities committed by men of an alien race and religion have called forth a cry of righteous indignation. But are the pages of our ecclesiastical annals so clear that we can claim for ourselves a monopoly of humane sentiments and impulses? There is no stronger proof of the inherent power of Christianity than that it should have trampled over those scandals of Christendom. Islam can claim the support of her creed; we did those things in defiance of our creed.

Still Christ's little ones are falling by thousands on every side. Still the woe is gathering strength and volume for its discharge. When the Christian apologist wields the weapons of disingenuousness and fraud in defence of the truth,—when the Christian preacher uses words of lofty self-denial, and lives the worldliest of lives,—the cry of Christ's fallen and engulfed little ones rises up, Lord, how long?

J. B. L.

XVII. The Angels, their Mission and Sphere.

MATT. xviii. 10. *"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father."*

An angel is a created being, and yet an angel is something much more than man. More in point of intelligence; more in point of heart, capacity, and affection; more in majestic range of will. That there should be such a district of creation offers to our minds a kind of difficulty—but it is no more of the imagination than of the reason. It can be no source of surprise to any reasonable being who has fully grasped what it is to live in this marvellous universe of life, that there should open out before the eye a new district of life previously unknown.

Revelation is full of angels from first to last. It begins with the cherubims placed as guards at the gates of heaven, and ends with the angel of the apocalypse. They are the ministers of God in His active, governing providence in this lower world, and they are ranged round His throne in perpetual, devoted worship. As angels were the Christ's attendants when on earth, so by His will and appointment they are ours. It is said to us, as it was to Jesus, "He shall give His angels charge over Thee to keep Thee in all thy ways."

Looking at our text, the possessive pronoun "their angels" must mean that there is some sort of connection between the children and the angels; that the angels stand in relation to the children in certain positions, and that the children have certain rights over the angels. The natural meaning of the words of Jesus is that every single child has a guardian angel who perpetually beholds the face of the eternal Father. Our Lord's object here is not to insist upon the dignity or office of the angels, but upon the dignity of children. He directs our attention to this most solemn truth, the dignity of human life, even in its most insignificant forms. Childhood is ductile and passive, and may be moved by the slightest influence. Its habits will probably be formed easily for good or evil, and once formed are not easily broken from.

H. P. L.

XXVIII. Reversals. MATT. xix. 30. "*But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first.*"

I. I SHALL endeavour to enforce this saying with respect to the final judgment.

1. In the judgment of reason, many things that were first come to be last, and the last first.

2. The judgment of life also illustrates the text.

3. Our text is still more confirmed by the judgment of history.

4. We turn for the chief illustration of our text to the judgment of eternity. The final judgment will in many cases be the opposite of human judgment, because of the difference of its rule, and because of the difference of its manner of judgment.

II. I pass on to make a few practical inferences.

1. In view of this just judgment, we may be patient in the midst of the inequalities and injustice of the present time.

2. Let us be prepared through Christ for this strict and just judgment.

3. In view of such a judgment, how intensely true we should be.

4. Let us beware how we seek to be first at that day. He is most likely to be first who seeks not to be first, who forgets such seeking in the anxiety of his desire to be able to do good.

A. G.

XXIX. The Mission of Christ. MATT. xx. 28. "*Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.*"

THE mission of Christ into the world was distinct and definite. The ministry of the gospel should be alike clear and transparent.

I. Let us commence by expounding the text word by word.

1. The Son of man not only a son, but the Son of man qualified to become man's substitute.

2. He came. He was not thrust upon the stage of action; He came by His own consent.

3. He came not to be served, but to serve. He had no selfish thought in His soul.

4. And to give His life. We have no lives to give. Our lives are due to Divine justice. Christ had a life of His own—not due to God, and He gave it.

5. His death is our ransom. This may be fairly illustrated by the old Jewish ceremony of redemption money.

6. For many. The word for has a substitutionary meaning. Many—not all, and not few. Who they are God knows.

II. The main drift of the text is the doctrine of a vicarious atonement. Man is not delivered from the bondage of his sin without a price.

The ransom price was paid to the great Judge of all. The result is that man is redeemed.

C. H. S.

XX. The Head Stone of the Corner. MATT. xxi.

42. *"The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."*

THIS text describes very clearly what the proper place of Christ ought to be in the heart.

If the Bible be not a fable, Christ is the great fact of our universe. He is everything to God; and if He be not the same to us in some measure, we cannot be standing in our right relationship to God; and if that is not right, then none of our relationships are right—the centre is wrong—Christ is not in His own place. The image here used is that of a building. There is presented to the builders one particular "stone," which should have the chief place at the top of the angle, the head of the corner. But they reject it, and yet without the builders, and despite the builders, it goes there. The builders never put the head corner-stone into its place. Observe the expression "the same is *become* the head of the corner," and to carry out the same thought: "This is the Lord's doing." The Jews were the builders to whom God first gave the privilege of building His Church. They were the rejecting builders, upon whom after a few years of grace "the Stone" fell and found them to powder.

But we are all soul-builders, self-builders; and the great thing we have to do is to place the head corner-stone right.

None of the building can prosper or stand if Christ be not where He is made to be. There is a distinction between the foundation-stone and the head corner-stone. Christ is both, but there are Christians who acknowledge Him as the foundation-stone who do not honour Him as the culminating point of life, the head of the corner, life's focus, life's glory. Three things the corner-stone is to the building, and those Christ must be to us.

1. The structure ranges up to it. All else is below that it may be high, and all ministers to it.

2. The whole fabric holds it up to the view of men, that it may be admired.

3. It binds the whole together.

There is not a created thing but must one day glorify Jesus. To Him "every knee shall bow"—some with a loyal subject's will, some with a dastard felon's fear. The whole fabric of universal being shall at that day own Him the head corner-stone. The only alternative left to any man is how he will glorify Him. Shall it be by the stability of an endless love, or by the ruin of a Christless hope?

Therefore now let it be our daily joy to "bring out that top stone with shoutings," and cry "grace, grace unto it."

J. V.

XXXI. True Fame. MATT. xxvi. 13. "*Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.*"

It is a natural and innocent desire to seek to be honourably remembered. It is hallowed and transfigured here. Note the things that did not and the things that did move the Saviour to pronounce this noble eulogy and erect this abiding memorial.

1. 1. Not the social position of the individual. True fame independent of our external circumstances. The honours of His kingdom are not defined by pecuniary purchase.

2. Not the intrinsic value of the offering. It was a valuable offering, still there is something imponderable by

ny earthly balance, and it was that which Jesus saw. He saw her love.

3. It was not the opinion of those present at the time. Few things are more deceitful than popular applause. Our Lord did not care whether the multitude cried "Hosanna," or "Crucify."

II. What did move Him to pronounce the eulogy?

1. The motive was right. It was pure love to Himself. The higher the motive the purer the action. There is something higher than duty. That is a somewhat cold and stern mistress.

2. She found an appropriate way of showing her love. Love keeps invention at work, and brings something fresh out of every heart in which it operates.

Let us aim at the recognition of our work by God, for that is as lasting as God Himself.

W. M. T.

XXXII. Our Lord's Farewell to the World.

MATT. xxvi. 29. *"I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."*

I. OUR Lord here expresses His renunciation from that moment of all the joys and comforts of life. It was because now He had other work to do, and His love of man constrained Him.

II. Our Lord here takes farewell of earth. He does not repine; He does not withdraw from the world as an ascetic. He puts away the cup with as cheerful an air as He took it.

III. Our Lord's words contained His dying anticipation. He expected brighter days, fairer banquets, fresher wine. We learn, too, that the joys of heaven are social.

Our Lord's description of heaven represents Himself as happy, and happy with His people. Perhaps He referred to His second coming, to the establishment of the kingdom of God, when the glorious wine-cup of the New Jerusalem's best wine shall be passed from lip to lip.

C. H. S.

XXXIII. Gethsemane. MATT. xxvi. 42. "*O My Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done.*"

THE Passion of the garden is the deepest mystery of the Redeemer's incarnation—a fiercer conflict than His temptation in the wilderness—a greater anguish than His endurance of the cross. It is part of His work of redemption. A transaction between His atoning soul and God, over which a veil is drawn. He "treads the winepress alone." But let us look at the human aspect of the Redeemer's sorrow, and see how a pious human heart could pray under it, and accept it when it is clearly God's will that it should be borne.

I. The cup. Some of its ingredients were peculiar to Him as the Mediator for human sin; expressed in such passages as "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him," "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all," "the hour and power of darkness," "the prince of this world cometh"; but there were in it ingredients of sorrow, common to human life. The feebleness of friends, the forsaking of His disciples, the denial of Peter, the treason of Judas, the human sorrow of parting with His earthly friends,—all these, mingled with a human shrinking from death and the shame of the cross, were in the cup.

II. The conflict. He did not drink the cup without desires and prayers that if possible it might pass from Him, and in such inward conflict there was no sin. He made His prayer conditional upon its being God's will. He keeps hold firmly of God's fatherhood—"O My Father." There is no shadow of distrust upon His filial soul, nor suspicion of His Father's love.

III. The victory. He did drink the cup which it was not possible should pass. He came to do God's will; and though His flesh cried out in fear, He never thought of failing to do that will. It was the victory of perfect self-sacrifice. "Not My will but Thine be done." This victory was won by prayer. He was "heard in that He feared." He was strengthened to drink the cup. His strength was in His weakness, in the entireness with which He cast Himself upon His Father. The Gethsemane cup is put into every hand in turn, and sooner or later we must all

ry out in our agony, and pray with our faces to the ground; but if we cry in the spirit of the Master, we shall have no Gethsemane without its strengthening angel in it. Christ stooped to our human sorrow that He might raise us to His divine resignation, and when He asks us, "Can we drink of the cup that I drank of?" inspired by His example, and relying upon His help, we humbly say, "We are able."

H. A.

LXXXIV. Are we not all implicated? MATT. xxvii.

22. *"Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let Him be crucified."*

I. HERE we have the basis of a tremendous indictment against human nature.

1. Human nature does not know good. If it had, it would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

2. Human nature hated goodness in its most attractive form.

3. Humanity is guilty of the utmost possible folly, because in crucifying Jesus it crucified its best friend.

4. Human nature destroyed its best instructor.

5. Human nature submitted to the insolent tyranny of the priests.

6. Human nature was guilty of craven cowardice in striking one who would not defend Himself.

II. Let me shut the door against some self-righteous disclaimers.

"I should not have done so." Of whom wast thou born, out of a woman, as they were.

"I would have spoken for Him." Yes, and dost thou speak for Him now?

What have you done already? Have you sneered at the Gospel? Have you rejected it? Are you ignorant of it?

Have you ever doubted His power and His willingness to save?

For believers—oh what a sorrow to think we stabbed our Friend to the heart. If we have crucified Him—let us resolve to crown Him.

C. H. S.

XXXV. Pilate. MATT. xxvii. 24. *"When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude."*

PILATE from first to last was an unwilling agent in the crucifixion of the Lord; yet he yielded. The power of conscience in him was strong enough to protest, but it was not strong enough to resist. We are compelled to look into the man himself for the explanation of his conduct.

I. I. He had by his injustice and selfishness in the administration of his province, put himself already at the mercy of the Jews.

2. He had no sure moral standard for the regulation of his conduct.

3. He held low views of responsibility. Was there ever such a display of silliness as this washing of his hands before the people?

II. Let us look at a few practical lessons from this sad history.

1. Be on your guard against fettering yourself for the future by the conduct of the present.

2. Remember there is a higher rule of life than mere selfish expenditure.

3. Learn that sin is a voluntary thing.

4. Do not forget that it is not the washing of hands in water but the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Christ alone that can take away guilt.

W. M. T.

XXXVI. The Sabbath. MARK ii. 27. *"And He said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."*

THE Sabbath was instituted to be man's delight, not his burden; to be his rest in weariness and irritation of spirit. The question before us is, Are we using the Sabbath to the best advantage? Are we getting out of it all the blessings that God has lodged therein for us, and for our fellow-men? Let us look at this question as related to four points.

I. Rest. The fundamental idea of the Sabbath is that of physical rest. Take care of the body as the foundation on which the spiritual and intellectual must rise. Life is becoming a continuous physical strain, and the Sabbath should be, to those who feel the strain, a boon. Do men get the proper amount of rest for their wearied bodies and overtaxed brain by spending the entire day in the sustained mental effort to hear two or three sermons, and to teach one or two Bible classes in addition? Do they go back to their tasks on Monday morning fresher, brighter men, because of God's gift of Sabbath rest?

II. Christian instruction. In giving us a day of physical rest, God did not intend to give us a day of idleness. Religious instruction has always been a recognised feature of Sabbath observance, and in this I include all that goes to make us better acquainted with God in Christ, whether preaching, private study, or personal communion with God. Preaching is a legitimate means to this end, but too much preaching is as bad as none. Are we sufficiently familiar with the Bible? The remark is often made, I know nothing about the Old Testament; I seldom read it. There must be on the Sabbath quiet, studious, deep sinking into the Word.

The Sabbath calls back our minds to God's covenant made with Christian parents and their children, and to the obligations which grow out of these obligations to teach their children the statutes and ordinances of God.

III. The transition is easy to the third relation, viz., home life. Does the Sabbath give room for the exercise of a right influence upon home?

IV. Christian activity. We must not occupy the whole time on Sabbath with receiving. We must give. We should not be made to feel that the time spent in Christian work trenches on the time that belongs to other claims. Oh, that the Master Himself, the Lord of the Sabbath, may teach us to walk through the field which His feet have trodden.

M. R. V.

XXXVII. The Trials of Prosperity. MARK iv. 18*"The deceitfulness of riches."*

WE all know the trials of adversity. Let us endeavour to point out some of the dangers which are peculiarly incident to a state of worldly prosperity.

I. The growing occupation of time is one of the most serious of these dangers. To make a fortune one must rise early and sit up late. Now if the business of grace is to be transacted between God and the soul, there must be time for it. When we begin to be fairly floated on the great stream of success, that is the time to watch and pray.

II. If the time be abridged, and other objects fill the heart, is it not evident that when the time comes the inclination and spiritual taste for religion may be much abated?

III. The third danger is the increase of pride. We are all liable to the encouragement of this bad and foolish principle in all stages of life; but the pride of worldly substance is perhaps the most dangerous, the most shallow, and the most insidious of all, and is peculiarly offensive to God.

IV. Another danger is that of self-indulgence, an easy soft, luxurious temper.

V. Worldly success has a tendency to lead to a thoroughly worldly life, from which the spiritual is to a great extent excluded.

A. R.

XXXVIII. Christianity and the Survival of the

Fittest. MARK v. 25-27. *"And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing better, but rather grew worse, when she heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched His garment."*

WHAT I want to insist on is the compassion of Christ even for those who are, humanly speaking, incurable. He did not say to her, "Go away; lie down and wait for the end, while others take your place." So He taught us that

ough our powers may have limits, our pity must have one. But this while a supreme law of man's nature is by no means the law of nature otherwise. That law has been expressed in the formula "the survival of the fittest." That is to say, nature allows those only to live who are able to hold their own, and the rest she dooms to destruction. But when we pass from nature into the province of man, we meet with a law that breaks in upon this and controls it. We have a law requiring the strong to help the weak, and even the helplessly stricken are cast upon us as a peculiar care. This law of moral nature finds a sublime expression for itself of unique and touching beauty in the Cross. Not survival of the fittest but redemption of the lost was the law of life to Jesus. For our sickness this physician perished in His glorious prime.

From these facts there are two conclusions, the one theoretical and the other practical.

I. It seems clear that the natural law of a supreme struggle for existence and survival of the fittest could never by any process of development grow into the moral law of self-sacrifice and supreme compassion for the weak and suffering.

II. As to the practical outcome, I would not insinuate any charge against the thoughtful science of our age as it were opposed to the highest duties of humanity. Some have hinted that hopeless suffering would be best put an end to by making away with a useless life. But that was a voice from the depths beneath, which, happily, met with small response. But I claim for man an exceptional position in God's universe, that he may be led to do the better work of an exceptional virtue. It is a great thing to live under a higher law than that of the brute creatures, but our guilt is only the greater if we live like the brute. We are only Godlike, only worthy of Christ, as we walk in His steps and obey His law; only Divine as far as we are human, and cannot get mercy unless we show mercy.

W. C. S.

XXXIX. Christ's Wonder at Unbelief. MARK vi. 6.

"He marvelled because of their unbelief."

NO expression in the Gospels shows more strikingly than Jesus Christ was man.

I. What is the nature of unbelief? The essence is to refuse to admit the truth of God's revealed word. It is the oldest of our many spiritual diseases.

It is the grand reason why multitudes are not saved. It bars the way to heaven.

It is one of the commonest spiritual diseases in these latter days. Society seems leavened with it.

Its seat. (1) In the head. Men say they will not believe what they cannot understand. (2) In the heart. Men love sin and habits which the Bible condemns. Lord Rochester said, "A bad life is the great argument against the Bible." (3) Most commonly in a lazy, indolent will. People do not like to make up their minds.

II. Why is unbelief so marvellous? For one thing it was wonderful amongst the Jews. But we must look deeper.

1. Unbelief is a habit of soul confined to man. Angels in heaven, fallen spirits in hell, saints in paradise, sinners waiting the last judgment, all believe.

2. Unbelief is singularly arrogant and presumptuous. For how little the wisest know, and how superficial is their knowledge of the vast mass of mankind.

3. Unbelief is singularly unfair and onesided. It dwells on small things and refuses to look at these great facts—Christ, the Bible, the effect of Christianity.

4. It is marvellous when you consider how few leave this world unbelievers.

If you are tempted to unbelief,—

a. Deal honestly with your souls about secret sins.

b. Deal honestly with your souls about the use of means for acquiring religious knowledge.

c. Deal honestly with the religion of faith and those who profess it.

After all, if there were more real faith in the earth, there would be less unbelief.

The Pattern of Service. MARK vii. 33, 34. "*He touched his tongue ; and looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.*"

WE have here set before us the foundation and condition of all true work for God in the Lord's heavenward look. The heavenward look is the renewal of our vision of the calm verities in which we trust--the course for ourselves to the realities which we desire that others should see. The heavenward look draws new strength from the source of all our might. If our prayer, longing, trustful look, is turned to the heavens, we shall not speak in vain on earth when we say, "Be opened."

II. Let us look at the pity for the evils we would remove forth by the Lord's sigh. Pity that is not based upon and corrected by the look to heaven is dangerous ; pity that does not issue in strenuous work is more dangerous.

III. We have here loving contact with those whom we would help set forth in the Lord's touch. Whenever we would help their fellows, this is a prime requisite, that the would-be helper should come down to the level of those whom he desires to aid.

IV. We have here the true healing power and the consciousness of wielding it set forth in the Lord's authoritative word. The reflection of Christ's triumphant consciousness of power should irradiate our spirits as we do His work. The pattern of our work is before us in the Lord's look, His sigh, His touch, His word.

A. M.

Christ's Compassion on the Multitude.

MATT. ix. 36. "*But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.*"

In the course of our Lord's wandering life, teaching and healing, there had naturally gathered around Him a large number of persons who followed Him from place to place,

and we have here cast into a symbol the impression produced upon Him by their outward condition.

I. He teaches us how to think of men.

1. The outward was nothing except as a symbol and manifestation of the inward. Gauds and shows were nothing; sheer away He cut them all, and went down to the man. So the one question worth asking and worth answering is—How am I affected to Him?

2. The condition of humanity apart from Christ is shepherdless. There is no ruler and no teacher but Christ. The dim figures of religious reformers are gliding ghost-like to their doom: but Christ does not pass away.

3. Christ is the true centre of unity.

4. Dejected weariness, disgust, and disillusion are the lot of those who reject Christ. That is why wild revolutionists in youth are obstinate conservatives in old age.

II. He teaches us how the sight of men should touch us.

Pity, not aversion; pity, not anger; pity, not curiosity; pity, not indifference. How many of us walk the streets of our towns and never know one touch of that emotion when we look at these people in England here, torn, anarchic, and wearied, and shepherdless, within sound of our psalm singing in our chapels. The great science of comparative mythology has a side of danger. Remember the thing is alive affecting and destroying our brethren: we have to kill it first and dissect it afterwards.

III. How we should act. The darkness and sorrow of the heathen is a right motive, but very perilous; the deeper reason is, the love of Christ constraineth me. There should be (1) personal work; (2) prayer; (3) help.

A. M.

XLII. A Gracious Question. MARK X. 51. *"Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"*

I. CONSIDER the disposition this question shows on our Saviour's part.

1. It shows the delicacy of the Saviour. There is as little allusion made by the gospel itself to the sin of the sinner as possible. It is not, Come filthy, come naked, but it is, Come whosoever will.

2. Note the wisdom of the Saviour. Our Lord asks him a question which sets his mind to work, and gives him lessons in prayer.

II. Turn the question over again as it appeals to ourselves. What should we say in reply?

1. It ought to prompt a Christian tenderness in us.

2. Let us seek to conquer wisdom. The text suggests the idea of state: "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"

3. The generosity involved in our Lord's question supplies us with a strong incentive to boldness at the throne of the heavenly grace.

C. H. S.

XLIII. The Saviour and the Publicans. MARK

ii. 16. *"And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto His disciples, How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?"*

THE occasion of this question was the presence of Jesus at the farewell feast of Levi. This question was asked partly in ignorance and partly in ill-will. Our Lord would not leave to His simple and timid disciples the task of answering the critics. First, He rebuked with stern irony the self-righteousness of the questioners, and then He explains.

I. The answer to the question of the scribes and Pharisees sets forth the glory of our divine Saviour.

"The Friend of sinners" is one of the most glorious titles of our Lord. God's condescensions reveal His glory more completely than His magnificence.

1. The glory of His work. "To call sinners to repentance."

2. The glory of His character. "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?"

II. The answer to this question is a comment on the action and history of the Church of Christ.

Of her, too, this complaint has been made, age after age, by contemporary Pharisaism. Like her Lord, the Church of Christ has entered into the life of sinful humanity to

purify and elevate it. She may not cease to eat and drink with publicans and sinners.

III. These words are not without suggestiveness as to the duty and conduct of private Christians. In consorting with those who openly deny the truth of religion, or who live in flagrant violation of its precepts, there are two dangers to be guarded against:—

1. We must keep clear of Pharisaism, that rank weed which so soon springs up in the souls of believers.

2. We must not voluntarily expose our souls to risks which are palpable and overwhelming when no good can be done for the souls of others.

Let us endeavour when we are thrown with others, be they who they may, to think of our Lord at Matthew's feast, and pray Him for His gracious help that we too, sinners though we be, may speak a word in season to him that is weary.

H. P. L.

XLIV. The Sleeping Apostle. MARK xiv. 37.

"Simon, sleepest thou?"

I. A STUDY of the usage of the Gospel in reference to the Apostle's name shows that on the whole the name Simon brings into prominence the natural unrenewed humanity, and the name Peter suggests the apostolic office, the bold confessor, the impulsive warm-hearted lover, and follower of the Lord. The struggle between the two elements of his nature imparts an undying interest to his story, and brings him nearer to us than any of the others are. We too have to wage the conflict between the old and the new.

II. Let us learn to distrust our own resolutions. Aware of our own weakness and the flutterings of our own hearts, let us not mortgage the future, nor lightly say, I will, but rather turns our vows into prayers.

III. Note the slight value of even genuine emotion. Nothing takes so much out of a man. Emotion should be firmly based on an intelligent grasp of God's truth, and at once translated into action.

IV. How much easier it is to purpose and to do great things than small things. Peter could fight for Him, die

for Him, but he could not watch with Him. So let us listen to His gentle voice as He speaks to us, not as of old in the pauses of His agony and His locks wet with the dews of the night, but bending from His throne, and crowned with many crowns. Sleepest thou? Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

A. M.

XLV. The Stone Rolled Away. MARK xvi. 3, 4.

"And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great."

THE empty sepulchre is to us a subject of contemplation, and a teacher of great lessons. There are some sepulchres from which we would not desire to roll the stone away. But in this grave of Jesus there are some things very sweet, holy, and precious. Let us listen to some of the lessons of the stone that was rolled away.

I. Mark the importance of not dwelling on difficulties in Christian work, and in the discharges of the duties which life brings. In every great thing there are difficulties—some known to us, others not. But there are also proceedings upon the part of God that we do not know, and those proceedings are always helpful to those who are going about doing their duty. It is not my work to roll away the stone, but it is my duty to go to the grave.

II. But we must not be visionary in the sense of forgetting that there are difficulties. Cheap things are worthless things, and easy virtues poor virtues. Jonah's gourd grew in a night, but died in a day; oaks have harder growth and longer endurance. The highest and noblest of our duties are achieved through the greatest and most appalling difficulties.

III. In all our work, let us fall back on God's co-operation. He always helps good work. He has profound and unceasing interest in all human beings, in the simplest things if they are done for Him.

C. F. D.

XLVI. The Judgment on Zacharias. LUKE i. 20.

"Thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season."

ZACHARIAS is a striking example of the ills a good man may have to suffer as the result of his unbelief.

I. Consider his character and position. He was a genuine believer. He was well instructed and greatly enlightened. He held a high office as a priest. He had been peculiarly favoured. Soothing comfort had just been administered to him. This comfort had been given in answer to his own petition. He staggered at a promise which others implicitly believed.

II. What was the fault of Zacharias? His fault was that he looked at the difficulty.

III. Consider his penalty. Mercy tempered judgment. He was not struck dead, and the chastisement did not invalidate the promise. Do not be satisfied with being weak in faith. Let the utter unbeliever tremble. If a good man was struck dumb for unbelief, what will become of you who have no faith at all?

C. H. S.

XLVII. The Hungry and the Rich. LUKE i. 53.

"He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away."

WE are familiar with these words, occurring in the great hymn of the incarnation, but familiar words are apt to pass unnoticed. The lesson here conveyed is too important to be slurred over. Mary has, as she sings, two classes of persons before her—the hungry and the rich. She employs these words in their spiritual meaning. By the hungry Mary means those who have a sense of spiritual need, those who are dissatisfied at their present attainments. By the rich she means those who are conscious of no want, the self-satisfied.

I. The reward of spiritual hunger. "He hath filled the hungry with good things."

Mary touches upon a principle of very wide range

applicable to the needs of mental, of moral, and of physical life. If a living being is to benefit by nourishment in body, mind, or spirit, there must be the appetite, the desire for it.

The soul must desire God as its true life if God is to enlighten and strengthen it. Without this desire He will do nothing for it. It will be sent empty away. The one condition of true spiritual enrichment is a humble, earnest, persistent desire for the graces which God has to give.

II. The punishment of spiritual self-satisfaction—"sent empty away." The rich were the more numerous class in the days of the incarnation. They did not—the mass of them—feel any sense of religious want, but were very well content with themselves. There was but a small minority who waited for the consolation of Israel. The rich still abound in the race of Israel.

III. A man, to have the presence of God in his soul, must feel his need of God—he must be hungry. God gives to every creature a sort of preliminary endowment which creates in the soul a longing for Himself. The vast differences between man and man in later life depend upon almost unobserved acts which encourage or repress spiritual hunger in early years.

Like other tastes, a hunger for spiritual things is strengthened by exercise—it is weakened by neglect. We cannot afford the eternal loss of God. Let us ask Him to give us a strong desire to enjoy Him for ever.

H. P. L.

XLVIII. Simeon. LUKE ii. 26. "*And it was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.*"

WHEN the eyes of this saint once looked on Jesus, he never wished them to gaze on aught more on earth. We remark:—

I. That God always honours preeminently devoted men. Undevout minds are too worldly, too apathetic, too dull, to hear the secret whispering of heaven. The spiritual ear alone can hear the still small voice that comes across the universe from the spirit-world.

II. Simeon was a man of preeminent devotion to God. He had been reconciled to God. His religion was not mere forms and ceremonies, but devoutness of soul. The Holy Ghost rested on him, aided him in his devotion, and guided him into the temple to see the Lord's Christ.

III. Though Simeon was a preeminently devoted man, he had great discouragement in obtaining a sight of the object he so supremely desired. The snows of age were upon his head, his eyes grew dim, his limbs tottered, but he still said, "I shall see Him before I die." Unbelief suggests—How do you suppose that you will be permitted to see the Lord's Christ? He so great and you so little. Are not your sins too great in magnitude and number to be forgiven? Do you suppose that the sins of an age can be pardoned in a moment of time—sins that have spread over years of your life?

The answer to these questions is that eighteen hundred years ago on the accursed tree Jesus said, "It is finished."

J. C.

XLIX. The Result of Christ's Coming. LUKE

ii. 34. "*Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.*"

THIS was a saying of the aged Simeon, when our Lord Jesus was presented in the temple. His burst of inspired song moved astonishment in Joseph and even in Mary. Simeon's last words, "the glory of Thy people Israel," might have encouraged unwarranted expectations in their hearts, and the words of the text seem to be intended to check these natural but undue expectations regarding the effect of Christ's Advent. The child of Mary is set "for the fall and rising again" of many a human soul.

I. Christ's coming was not to have a uniform effect upon human souls. Christ by His coming into this world does not bless everybody, though it is in His heart to do so. Men can, if they like, reject Him, and in fact they do. The spiritual world is not ruled mechanically. Men could not regard Jesus with indifference, nor escape from some sort of profound emotion at coming in contact with Him, but the results were not uniform. They were for rising or falling.

II. The falling of many in Israel is the first effect noted by Simeon. Isaiah had said that the Lord would be a "stone of stumbling," and this was shown to be the case again and again in Israel's history. The fall which Christ occasioned to the majority of Israel was not from the religion of Moses—nor was it from morality—but it was a falling away from the Christ, when He had presented Himself to them.

III. Christ was also set for the rising of many in Israel. This was His original purpose in coming among us, which was only limited by the free but perverted will of man. The gospel tells us of several for whose rising again Christ was set. It was true of each disciple who persevered—of Magdalene and of St. Paul. The words of Simeon still have their power, and suggest a grave question for every one. Christ is set now as of old, for the rise and fall of many. His will is that all should rise. Do not let us balk His gracious purpose. Let us cling rather by faith, by love, by sincere repentance, to His pierced hands, that we may have a part in the first, the moral resurrection, and then by His grace in the second beyond it.

H. P. L.

L. Our Just Obligation. LUKE ix. 59, 60. "*And He said unto another, Follow Me. But he said Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.*"

THESE words seem at first harsh and severe. Many regard them as breathing the spirit of those religious movements and institutions which dissolve the nearest and most sacred ties of natural kinship for the interests of the Church and the promotion of the individual religious life. Young people of a cold and selfish nature sometimes think that the new life releases them from obligations of filial affection and obedience, which they had always found irksome. But our Lord's teaching gives no sanction to this monstrous error. The common relations of life are a discipline whereby we are trained to spiritual perfection.

What did our Lord say, and on what circumstances? The man probably heard of his father's death when he was with Christ, and wanted to return to the funeral. But the father was dead, and the son could do nothing for him, now. If he had neglected him in life, he could not repair the neglect. Still you say natural affection impels a man to discharge the last offices of love. Yes; but there are reasons which justify a man in being absent from his father's funeral. This was a very solemn and critical time. The man appears to have been selected as one of the seventy; and if he had gone home, he would have been detained some days by the ceremonial law; his purpose might have been weakened; so even in the hour of his grief he is commanded to do this great service.

Let the dead bury their dead. Does this show contempt for the unspiritual? No; our Lord never spoke with contemptuous indifference of such; it was His very eagerness that they should rise to a new and better life that led Him to call this man away. The whole narrative suggests that critical moments in a man's life bring critical duties. If God is near us now in a very special and solemn manner, then that principle enters our life and regulates our duty.

R. W. D.

LI. Influence. LUKE xi. 1. *"Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."*

WE have here a simple illustration of the silent involuntary influence of our Lord.

One of His disciples had observed Him praying, and struck with the grandeur and sweetness of the act, he asks to be taught how to pray.

Without a commandment, but by the power of His example, He influenced His disciple.

I. It is a real influence, that of example.

All in whom Christ lives in supreme affection can and must live Him out, giving out the very motive which He gives to them, and which spreads forth to others.

Doing the will of Christ is not always best done by the restless desire and pursuit of definite exertion, but often

better by the existence and sight of the calm and satisfaction of a soul filled to overflowing with the life of God. He who is most a child of God in faith, hope, and love, is most of a king for God over himself and over others, wielding irresistible power, and gaining widest triumphs.

II. Example of its influence.

You see it in Christ in this incident. Teach me to pray, said the disciple; but he had more than half learned the lesson when he looked on Christ praying. The evangelists never pause to extol the life of the Master. To tell the life was best to praise it. On the way to the cross, Jesus does not recommend patience—He is patience. On the cross He does not speak of love—He is love as never was before. You find the same in lesser degree in His servants of all ages—in Moses, Elijah, John, Paul. The life had the most influence for good.

III. A few words by way of application of this truth.

1. To those who need encouragement. Some feel much the uselessness of their lives—no money, little knowledge or eloquence. But you are not useless if you are true to what is pure and gentle and brave—true to Christ.

Influence is not the less powerful because it is the more silent. The grandest powers in nature are silent. Never let it be forgotten that only those who fill their hearts with the grace and work of Christ shall all unconsciously overflow upon the hearts of others.

2. This truth speaks to those who need warning.

Remember that no one lives to himself. The influence of selfish aims, unregulated tempers, illiberal gifts, goes forth where you little think, and does evil you would dread to acknowledge. What a minister for evil the very presence of an unrenewed man is wherever he goes!

But if you come to Jesus, though with souls most feeble and most sinful, you may become through Him most magnetic and mighty for the highest issues and the widest influence.

LII. Man's Fear and the Divine Dissuasive.

LUKE xii. 6, 7. "*Fear not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows.*"

THESE words occur in a discourse of the Lord to His disciples, in which He is instructing and preparing them for future work, as heralds of the Kingdom. He warns them that they will meet with many dangers and enemies, "but fear not," says the Master, "you are watched at every step, and come life, come death you are safe."

I. Man's fears. They are of two kinds—

1. Those which respect this world. Some people go through life much more anxiously than others, though in outward circumstances there seems little difference in their respective lots. A good deal depends upon a man's temperament as to the way in which he will take things. Those on the lower ground have the least care. As we rise higher in the social scale, then it brings increasing solicitude. Provision has to be made not only for the wants of the day, but for appearances. It is right enough that men should look to appearances. God looks to appearances. He has made this world-house beautiful, and we are but following the Divine example when we try to make our life a thing of variety, largeness and grace. But in doing so, the gates of anxiety are opened to us, and we are careful and troubled.

2. Fears respecting the world to come and our spiritual state and relation to that.

The fullest victory over the cares and fears of this life is to be gained only by living for a higher world. Let us try to see Jesus standing as Lord of both worlds, and saying, "Fear not."

II. The Divine dissuasive. "Fear not." This is supported and recommended by several arguments, as the limited power of man and of circumstances. Men may say and do a great deal which may be injurious to you, but you always come to the limit: "After that, there is nothing more they can do." Again, there is unlimited power with God, and if we are true trusting disciples of Christ this is a great dissuasive from fear. God will use all that infinite power to protect and save His trusting children. "He telleth the number of the stars," and has

regard to every sparrow that flies. Why should we fear? Every hair of my head is telling me to be quiet and to trust, for the very hairs of my head are all numbered. Then our Lord teaches us that we are of more value to God than the inferior creatures, He has a higher care about us. It is part of our religion to acknowledge our unworthiness, but to cherish a high estimate of our worth is also a part. We were made in the very image of God, having the emotions, thoughts and feelings of God in our human measure, and though we have sinned, we can also repent, turn, and come again to our Father. "Ye are of more value than many sparrows, therefore fear not."

A. R.

LI. Business Life. LUKE xii. 15. *"And He said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."*

I SHALL try to keep in view the chief risk to the moral and religious nature which are incident to a business life; and my aim will be to show you where the best safeguard against it is to be sought.

I. The chief dangers, what are they?

It is a misfortune in the path of a commercial trader to be kept in perpetual contact with the purely material value of all possible substances. The public sentiment of great business centres is apt to reckon a man's worth by his business profits. It is always tempted to erect an ignoble or defective ideal of success in life. I do not speak of the vulgar dangers to honesty and truthfulness, which indeed beset men in all professions and classes.

II. What are the safeguards?

1. Cultivate to the utmost a youthful thirst for truth, and a youthful sympathy with what is ideal, unselfish, grand in conduct.

2. Cultivate a sympathising contact with men and women in other than mere business relationships.

These are safeguards of the secondary order.

3. The only primary and sufficient safeguard for any of

us is the religion of Jesus Christ. See how the Christian man is guarded against settling down into a selfish worldling.

(1.) Religion opens the widest, freest outlook for the mind into the eternal truth, enlarging a man's range of spiritual sight, and enabling him to judge of all things in both worlds in their true proportion.

(2.) It supplies us for that reason with the only true and perfect standard by which to test the value of things, and so corrects the one-sided materialistic standard of business.

(3.) It transforms business itself from an ignoble to a noble calling, because it substitutes for the principle of mere profit the ideal of service.

J. O. D.

LIV. The Little Flock Encouraged. LUKE xii.

32. *"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."*

NO one can read these verses without feeling that at least in part, Christ called His flock "little" because it is the language of endearment. The principle, that whatever challenges our protection attracts our affection, is deeply rooted in our nature. Are we not all sent back into a spiritual little childhood, that good men and angels and God Himself may the more tenderly love us when we are babes?

I. The little flock.

Three things make the little flock—

1. God's eye upon you lovingly.
2. An election out of the herd into the few.
3. An inward process of deepening humiliation every day of your life.

II. It is to comfort "the little flock" that our Lord speaks these words.

His argument is two-fold.—

1. The comfort of the fatherhood of God. There is a strong tendency to treat God as if He were anything else rather than a Father. No one on this side heaven can have any conception what a dear thing it is to God to save, keep, and love a soul. All that Christ bore upon this

earth is only the expression of the yearning love of our Father's heart.

2. There is comfort in the character of the Father's gift. Our Saviour evidently intends it to be a reasoning from the whole to the part. "Fear not about things of daily life, for it is your Father's will and pleasure to give you what includes far more—a kingdom." Shall the child of a king, nurtured in his father's court, be anxious every day about little crumbs? "The kingdom" which the Father loves to give is inward. It is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. And this kingdom in a man's heart is what it is, a kingdom, because self-government is begun. And the reason why there is self-government, is that Christ is in His right place. His pleasure is at the top, and all things are in subjection to Him.

III. Fear is dishonouring to God. Fear paralyzes. Joy makes us do all things well. God will do His own work, only you trust Him for it. He will be a Father to you to anticipate every want, and He will be a King to you to supply you royally.

J. V.

LV. A Terrible Saying. LUKE xii. 23. "*It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.*"

PROBABLY this was a proverb amongst the Jews, which our Saviour used and endorsed.

I. It seems strange that Jerusalem should ever have sunk so low as to monopolise the sin of murdering the prophets. The righteous retribution is still inflicted wherever sin seeks shelter in the solemn sanctions of a sounding profession. There is that secret wickedness in the heart of every one of us, that would have made us do the like a thousand times. How terrible must the deathbed be of a man who, after having preached the Gospel, has become an apostate! Can we picture the siege of Jerusalem?

II Let me remind you of the utter uselessness of outward privileges, unless there be inward purity. It is possible to retain sin unsubdued and unchecked, notwith-

standing all the righteousness that is taught in precepts and all the grace that is exhibited in ordinances.

III. We have seen that Jerusalem had a monopoly of one sin; she killed the prophets. Are there no sins which God's people may be charged with as exclusively their own? No servant can sin as a son can. There is a peculiar wickedness about the sins of Christians.

C. H. S.

*

LVI. The Strait Gate. LUKE xiii. 24. "*Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, but shall not be able.*"

I. THE gate which it is most desirable to enter.

1. Because it is the gate of the City of Refuge.
2. Because it is the gate of a home.
3. Because it leads to a blessed feast.
4. Because the loss of those outside the gate is so terrible.

II. There is a crowd of people who will seek to enter in and will not be able. There is a difference between seeking and striving.

1. Some are unable to enter in because the pride of life will not let them.
2. Some are unable to enter because they seek to take sin with them.
3. Some are unable to enter because they want to postpone the matter until to-morrow.
4. Some think they are in and have mistaken the outside for the inside.

Many will seek in vain dying, and so it would appear even after death.

C. H. S.

LVII. More Room. LUKE xiv. 22. "*It is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.*"

I. WE have here a desirable announcement: "It is done as Thou hast commanded."

It is done; not, I have done. There is a becoming modesty here.

Have we gone out after sinners? Have we gone into

the streets and the lanes of the city and compelled them to come in?

II. We have a remarkable statement: "Yet there is room."

We may infer this from the doctrine of election. A great and vast number is chosen by God, and they are not yet gathered in.

The efficacy of the atonement leads to the same conclusion. With a mysterious spiritual consciousness, with an eager sympathetic anxiety, the Church feels and knows that there is room.

III. There is implied in the text a most blessed consummation that the room shall be filled. The glory of Christ lies not only in the sacrifice, but in the sense that that sacrifice suffices.

C. H. S.

LVIII. The Bible Theory of Human Nature.

LUKE XV. 17. "*And when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger.*"

I. THE simplest test of any religion is its theory of the nature of man. We propose to bring the Bible theory of man's nature to the test of one admitted and notorious fact—the fact of the exceptional unhappiness of man. Our Lord confronts this fact. The prodigal son is not only a sufferer but an exceptional sufferer. More, he who suffers is infinitely superior to those who are happy—they are but hired servants and he is the son. The animal creation live unvexed by care, unhaunted by the fear of death. Man pays the penalty of his standing by this, that he is capable of an infinity of agonies. We might be told that susceptibility to pleasure must always involve a corresponding susceptibility to pain. But what a sad answer. Is the crown of completion science offers to be a crown of thorns?

II. Man is unhappy in proportion to the degree in which he obeys his own nature; with the animal it is the reverse. But man has two pains—the pain of satiety and the pain of remorse. How do scientific men explain this?

III. We believers have a theory. We hold that man is

not in his natural and proper element. God gave him a spiritual nature, and before he can be happy his spirit must have communion with God. Besides, it tells us that the origin of human sin and sorrow has been the wandering of man. Written revelation tells him, and alone can tell him, that there is a remedy for his unhappiness. Rise up, and go to your father.

IV. We are able to show that all along the history of the Divine society Christ came on earth to found, there have been instances of this restoring and this healing power.

We say then that the old Gospel theory of the fall and restoration and delivery of man is the theory that best accords with the facts.

W. C. M.

LIX. True Riches. LUKE xiv. 11. "*The true riches.*"

LUKE xii. 21. "*Rich toward God.*" JAMES ii. 5. "*Rich in faith.*" 1 TIM. vi. 18. "*Rich in good works.*" MATT. vi. 20. "*Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.*"

THESE texts give a complete view of the New Testament teaching on the one subject to which they all relate. The aim of multitudes in this life is simply to acquire a fortune. When we come to define riches, we find it difficult to give preciseness to the idea attached to the word. The man who has gold enough for all his wants is rich. Money is but a means to an end, that end being the convenient attainment of things requisite for comfortable existence.

The soul has wants as well as the body, and the means by which its necessities are to be supplied may be called "riches," the true riches.

I. What are these riches? He is rich who has a good conscience, a will in unison with God's, and emotions of happiness in the contemplation of God; God Himself is the true wealth of the soul. We are all originally poor, for we have sinned and wandered from God. But we all, if we will, may become spiritually wealthy through Jesus Christ our Lord.

II. How can we acquire these riches? James has given us the answer: "rich in faith." It is by faith that we become rich toward God.

III. How are we to keep and increase these riches? Paul enlightens us here when he bids Timothy charge his hearers to be "rich in good works." The riches of personal deliverance may be regarded as the one pound which Christ gives to all who will take it: his own good works are the improvement which the believer makes on that original gift. This improvement is both personal and diffusive.

IV. The exhortation to "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven."

1. The pursuit of this wealth is attended with no danger to the character.
2. In the search every one may be successful.
3. This spiritual treasure is abiding.

W. M. T.

LX. Two Worlds. LUKE xvi. 25. *"But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented."*

THE lesson is, the man who seeks enjoyment in this life as his chief end must suffer in the next life, and he who endures suffering in this life for righteousness' sake shall be happy in the next.

I. What are the good things which the rich man received here for which he must be tormented hereafter.

1. The worldly man derives a more intense physical enjoyment from this world's goods than does the child of God. In the past history of mankind the great positions and the great incomes, as a general rule, have not been in the hands of simple and penitent men. Besides, how often does it happen that a fine physical constitution, health and vigour, are given to the worldling and denied to the child of God.

2. The worldly man derives more enjoyment from sin and suffers less from it in this life than does the child of God. The really renewed man cannot enjoy sin. The days of a stupid and impenitent man glide by with no twinges of conscience. But is it right, is it just that this state of things should last for ever? Ought it not to be reversed?

II. The practical lessons which follow from this subject are :—

1. No man can have his good things, in other words his chief pleasures, in both worlds. God and this world are in antagonism.

2. Every man must make his choice whether he will have his good things now or hereafter.

3. It is the duty and wisdom of every man to let the world go and to seek his good things hereafter.

W. G. T. S.

LXI. The Impotence of Miracles. LUKE xvi. 31.

"And He said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

THIS parable contains three vivid contrasts :—

1st. Between the rich and the poor.

2nd. Between the living and the dead.

3rd. Between the saved and the lost.

To the last of these three contrasts our text belongs. Dives and Lazarus are now among the dead, not yet separated as they will be after the final judgment, but separated, we are told, by an impassable gulf. Some sort of communication is still possible. Abraham's answer to Dives is meant to represent the mind and judgment of our Lord Himself.

I. This reply teaches us how far the actual sight of a miracle would be likely to produce real faith in the unseen world. Dives let Lazarus lie at his gate, because he had no true belief in the unseen.

II. A miracle is only likely to have real effect when addressed to a particular set of men. The man must have an eye to God if he is to be lightened by the miracle. Miracles are intended to assist those who are already seeking God. They cannot force a soul to believe.

III. Abraham's reply teaches us how far circumstances can be presumed to determine conduct. What a miracle is to faith—that favourable circumstances are to duty. They make it easy. Favourable circumstances have an immense restraining power, but of themselves they have

no active power to change the heart. Dives and his brethren were flooded with the light of God's moral law, but Dives thinks that is not enough. If we have listened to Moses and the prophets and to the Lord of life Himself to no lasting purpose, we should not be persuaded though the buried dead were to come forth to tell us of the reality of that future world.

In conclusion, Lazarus is close to us. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

H. P. L.

LXII. God's Judgments. LUKE xvii. 37. *"And they answered and said unto Him, Where Lord? And He saia unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together."*

THE twofold enquiry that always greets the prophet is Where? and When? These two questions are prompted by curiosity and self-interest. The passionate desires of human nature to know the future are testified to by the whole history of superstition and imposture. Even inspired prophecy has been treated in the spirit of this desire. Our Lord teaches us how such questions should be answered, and how such a spirit should be dealt with. He does not answer the "Where" and "When;" not even in the Revelation to His beloved disciple does He do so.

I. Observe how in a very real sense he does answer the questions. The answer in effect is this: My judgment shall come upon the earth as come the vultures upon the dead by an unerring and terrible instinct. So truly then as there is ripeness for judgment, and wherever there is that ripeness, there shall come the judgment of the day of the Lord.

II. Mark what these words tell us concerning the great laws of God's judgment. These judgments are not arbitrary judgments, but are joined to the offence by a natural and necessary law. Where there is ripeness for them there is no escape from them; but they only fall where there is that ripeness. We learn also, that before

the last and crowning judgment there must be many lesser and preliminary days of judgment.

III. Where are we to look for signs of our Lord's coming? Not to the heavens far off, but at the dead thing which lies, it may be, at your very feet.

Can we discern here and there the corpse that calls and the eagles of judgment that come at its calling. In the case of individuals it is not wise to judge; but with families, churches, nations, there is no judgment sound but a present judgment. The practical lesson is, "Judge therefore, yourselves brethren, that ye be not judged by the Lord."

W. C. M.

LXIII. Faith at the End. LUKE xviii. 8. "*When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?*"

I. WHAT is the feeling with which this saying was uttered? Christ was like other teachers—now accepted, now rejected of men. Now he seemed to feel a sort of inward triumph and yet at the last He experienced a depth of darkness and desolation with which no sorrow in this world can be compared. He did not lose faith in the truth, but he was inclined to despair of His fellow-men.

II. If Jesus Christ were to come again, what judgment would He pass upon us and upon our lives, and how would He apply the truths of the Gospel to modern society? All things would appear to Him secondary in comparison with one question—Are men becoming better? What would He say about our religious parties? about those who draw remote inferences from those words? about those who exaggerate the importance of days? He would teach the new commandment which is also old. He would not decide authoritatively disputed points, nor would he utter the shibboleths of rulers or statesmen.

III. What prospect is there of any great moral or religious improvement among mankind?

We do not suppose that the condition of the poor is always to continue amongst us as at present, or deny that the blessings of education, health, and comfort may be equally diffused among all. Are not our large religious

differences regarded differently now from what they formerly were? Are they not in some instances become ridiculous?

Again, there seem to be signs that the opposition between religion and science, faith and knowledge, of which we have heard so much, is fading away.

B. J.

LXIV. The Publican's Prayer. LUKE xviii. 13.

"God be merciful to me a sinner."

THIS is the only thought which befits a living man in the presence of his Creator.

What other link can come between the God of holiness and love, and the sinner, but mercy! "God be merciful."

I. In these few words of the contrite soul there is an argument which God will never reject. It is the plea God loves. "God be merciful to me because I am a sinner." David knew that blessed argument when he said: "Lord pardon my iniquity, for it is great." God has made a book, and it is for sinners; God has filled it with promises, and they are for sinners. He has given His own Son, and it is only for sinners.

II. The way to obtain this fitting condition of mind. It is to be reached in the same way as the publican attained it. His whole mind appears to have been occupied with God, the rest was only secondary. Most persons when they try to cultivate penitence, look into themselves. It is the study of God, not of ourselves, which makes the penitent mind. Nothing makes sin seem so sinful and so hateful as the contemplation of the love of God.

III. Whoever would be truly a penitent must have right views of mercy.

It is an easy thing to say "God have mercy upon me." Upon the just apprehension of what this mercy is depends the whole power and acceptability of the prayer.

If God, simply by an act of sovereignty, forgave a sin and remitted the punishment, it would not be mercy. Such a pardon so given, would be practically a licence to all others to sin.

Before God can show Himself merciful to a sinner He

must receive a satisfaction and an equivalent. That satisfaction is Christ. The believing penitent presents Christ and God is satisfied, and His mercy, which was from all eternity, but which was kept back by the barrier of man's sins, the barrier being removed by the death of Christ, now flows free and unrestrained. It is essential that every man who would find forgiveness must have this view of God's mercy in his mind, fixedly on the affections, graspingly in his faith, as he lifts up his prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

J. V.

* **LXV. Receiving Christ Joyfully.** LUKE xix. 6. "*And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.*"

I. WHY do not all men thus receive Jesus Christ joyfully?

1. The chief reason lies in the depravity of man's nature.
2. Many men reject Christ out of sheer ignorance.
3. Others are actuated by positive aversion to the Saviour.

4. Others are worldly and eaten up with too many cares.

5. Others are taken up with the world's frivolities.

II. Why do some men receive Him joyfully? The answer is, because grace has made them to differ.

We receive Christ joyfully because He comes into our hearts with such gracious offices.

Because He comes in such a blessed spirit.

III. How do those show their joy who have thus received the Master?

1. Some show unwonted enthusiasm when they receive Christ.

2. The better way of showing our joy is by turning His enemies out.

3. Another proof is receiving His people.

4. Another proof is loving His cross.

5. Another proof is wishing that other people may receive Him joyfully too.

C. H. S.

LXVI. Zaccheus. LUKE xix. 9. "*And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.*"

THE interview of Christ with Zaccheus is striking whether you look at it merely in its outward aspect, or try to get at its inward meaning. The course of the ministry of our Lord Jesus was drawing near its end, and a great desire to see Jesus had taken possession of the mind of Zaccheus. What primarily was in and under this desire I rather suppose Zaccheus himself could not tell to his dying day.

I. The manner in which this conversion was brought about. It was by this—that it came clearly and personally home to Zaccheus that Christ would come to him in kindness and goodwill. Of course in this, as in every conversion, grace was concerned. But still, what I have said seems to have been in the forefront, to have been in the van of the army that carried the day. The past of his own life and character made him all the more aware of how utterly strange and new this love and truth was that was coming in disguise to such a selfish, false, lying, unscrupulous man as he had been. Many feel like Zaccheus that there could be no connection between their life and the Christian life. But you are not to think of that, but of the Man who is here in His grace—come to be your own, own friend.

II. The attitude of the parties on this occasion. Both Jews and disciples murmured at this horrid mistake. Do not be very anxious about misconstruction, even on the part of good people, if only we are sure that we are following Christ in His purity and kindness.

Then Zaccheus, how could he express his feeling? He was no theologian, and so he took his covetousness and oppression and laid them at the feet of Christ. When a man stands face to face with Christ and knows he is forgiven, that man goes with his heart swelling to sin no more.

III. Compare this case with cases in the previous context. Pharisees cannot enter the kingdom. The rich man could not. Even Peter asked, "What shall we have therefore?" They are all outstripped by a poor old worldling like Zaccheus.

LXVII. Living to God. LUKE xx. 38. *"For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him."*

THE Sadducees, the free-thinkers of the day, had presented to Christ a supposititious case, which they thought incompatible with the doctrine of the resurrection—the case of a woman who had seven husbands, "Whose wife should she be of the seven?" Our Lord's first refutation lay in their ignorance of the heavenly nature. He affirms "they do not marry, but are the children of God, being children of the resurrection." Next Christ passes to a positive refutation which He draws from an unlooked-for part of the Old Testament, from the Pentateuch, which the Sadducees held to be alone inspired. The force of the argument lies in the use of the present tense, "I am the God"—not I was the God—"of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob."

I. How does Christ's quotation, that "God is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" show that their bodies will rise again? Though the reasoning of Christ demonstrates that they live, yet there has been no direct proof of the resumption of the body.

Christ says, I take your own definition of the terms to live and die; to live is for body and soul to hold together, to die is for body and soul to be separated. But to God the man does live, "For all live unto Him;" therefore, although that body be in the grave and the soul in Hades, they still hold together and belong to each other. To you death seems division of soul and body, but to God there seems no division. If there was, it would not be said, "all live unto Him." Some germ and element of the body lives in real communion with its own spirit in paradise; therefore they must come together again, there must be a resurrection.

II. These things being so, let us see some of the consequences. We must not despise our body but reverence it and use it well, for if we sin with that body that body is yours for ever and ever. Jesus' body after death and resurrection had scars. To God nothing dies; it changes only, "For all live unto Him." Respecting the spirit, it cannot be that after death its existence is torpid and energies dormant. To realize that if they "live unto Him"

they are in a very ecstasy of being and of joy, should help us to live an earnest, busy and holy life. The thought should animate and gladden us. Nearer than we to the fountain of life, they drink in more of its living waters, and that makes their glory; but further down the same stream we are drinking, and that is our grace.

J. V.

LXVIII. Patience. LUKE xxi. 19. *"In your patience possess ye your souls."*

It should rather read, By your endurance ye shall gain possession of your lives. It is also "ye shall bring your spiritual life safely through the coming troubles."

It was a sore trial for the early Christians to be severed from their holy places, from their city home. In that sundering of cherished ties there lay, we may well believe, an agony that changed the very nature of those who endured it. But it taught them to look far afield, to bow down at no single shrine, and sent them forth to evangelize the world. Out of the ruin of their most cherished relics there grew up a more noble conception of the Church.

Age after age each time of change has seemed to bring with it the end; at each crisis have been heard the same appeals to heaven, the same despair of earth; and yet to those who had patience the evil time has passed away, and men have found themselves living in a fresh air of hope with expanded vision and larger powers for good.

Our tranquillity is little affected by news of distant suffering. It is the old Horatian difference between the eyes and the ears. We fancy that our own troubles are far the worst the world has ever been called on to undergo.

Warnings come from older men to whom the dark cloud seems to cover the heavens. The young see the sunshine coming up with soft rich colours of promise from behind the storm. Are there any peculiar causes for alarm?

I. The alarm is as old as Christendom.

II. The existence of some life is a cheering thing.

III. We need more manliness in our religion; more that will attract hard-knit men.

IV. If the Christian faith is to declare its Divine origin in

the face of vehement attack or learned contempt, it cannot be by shutting itself up in safe sanctuary and refusing to enter the field with its antagonists.

It is not without anguish that we rise "out of our dead selves to better things." Yet there is no other way for the nobles of mankind.

G. W. K.

LXIX. Christ's Second Coming. LUKE xxi. 27.

"Then shall ye see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory."

THROUGHOUT the most solemn and pathetic series of predictions in this chapter, Christ is speaking of two distinct events so simultaneously that it is, at times, difficult to say of which He is speaking. Undoubtedly the destruction of Jerusalem was a true shadow of the great day of judgment, and our Lord's thought appears now to have passed from the nearer judgment upon Jerusalem to a more awful judgment. It is difficult for us to realize that this judgment will certainly take place. The imagination finds it hard to picture to itself this tremendous collapse—this overwhelming conclusion of all that we see and are most conversant with. The date of this judgment is in the hands of God. It is one of those times and seasons which He has put in His own power, and it cannot be conjectured by us without risk of folly and disappointment. With God "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." If He seems to delay it is in His mercy, not in His forgetfulness, still less in His impotence. He is not willing that any should perish.

The last judgment will come home to every one of us as closely as anything possibly can. We shall all see Jesus Christ in His true majesty and glory. We shall all see ourselves as we truly are. The day for disguises and half truths will be past. The ambitions, titles, stations, positions, will be nothing to us then.

In presence of the last realities we are all of us alike on an absolute level. Let us learn that all that belongs merely to the things of time, and all that does not lead to God, or come from God, is but a surface incident in the history of existence—is nothing.

H. P. L.

LXX. Peter's Sin. LUKE xxii. 61. "*And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.*"

THE sins of God's people are noted in Scripture to show us—first, that we must cut off all man worship in the Church of Christ; second, to show us that it was not through works, but entirely through Christ, that even the most eminent and faithful of God's servants were chosen; third, that we may learn to know the evil of the unbelief that is within us, and that we are altogether dependent upon the grace of God.

I. Mark how the strongest are weak in their strongest point: Peter's courage and election were the very points in which he failed.

II. Peter sinned against light, bright and fully revealed light. Jesus was before him when he denied Him; and so do we all sin against light and in the presence of light.

III. Remember how Christ had forewarned Peter. He not only saw Peter manifesting his zeal and devotion, but He beheld that fierce and awful enemy who was to assail him.

IV. This looking showed that while the eye of Christ was resting on the failings of Peter, it was penetrating the innermost recesses of his heart. That look of Jesus, although it was like a sharp sword piercing the very heart of Peter, was also the healing balm, the life-giving tide, the refreshing rain which came into the soul of Peter.

A. S.

LXXI. The Dying Thief. LUKE xxiii. 42. "*And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.*"

THE abandoned robber proved himself in this last distress, to be one of the greatest men that ever lived in this world.

I. He saw the Lord in the victim. Others reviled the weak, defied the impotent, crushed the worm. Learn from this strange teacher, that victim and Lord are compatible terms.

II. This malefactor, a man who could have played with thrones and nations, saw life beyond death. Consider where he is—on the cross bleeding. His breath will

presently be gone. Is he a beast thrust through that will baptize the earth with red water and exhale and blend with the infinite azure? He is not conquered; he dies to live. "Lord," said he, "remember me." But you are dying: No. You are to be buried: No. It is your last hour: No. This man breathes eternity and creates kingdoms, and sets up empires, and gives away thrones. Speak thou in dying of life, of immortality, of kingdoms, of thrones.

III. This dying malefactor spoke up for Christ. The true Man is not utterly deserted. Some one will arise from a corner unthought of to speak a kind word for Him. How do we use our chance for speaking for Christ?

IV. This malefactor saw the kingdom beyond the cross. He would be remembered on the other side. Could Christ forget him? The last tongue that had a word to say for Him, that spoke, with dying breath, with intolerable agony, his tongue dropping blood while it dropped the syllables. Is Christ the man to forget a chivalry like that? No, no. There they went out together, Lord and thief, innocence and evil. Like takes to like, says the derisive man; The Sun purifies all things, says the Christian believer.

J. P.

LXXII. The Lord's Resignation. LUKE xxiii. 46.

"Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

LET me say a few words on this dying speech; first in its general aspect, then more in detail.

I. It represents to us one of the two main aspects of the Passion of our Lord—one, and one only. It represents that one quality of the soul which lies at the root of all true religion, which Bishop Butler has even ventured in one sense to call the whole of religion, that resignation.

This is that side of religion represented in one vast form of belief in the regions of the distant East, whose adherents are known by this one name of the "resigned ones."

II. But there is in Christian resignation something which goes beyond this mere passive submission. We may

take our Saviour's words one by one as our best guides in explaining what is meant.

1. "Father!" Light and cheerfulness flash in upon the soul at last. This gives our resignation a rational, affectionate character.

2. "Into Thy hands"—the hands which are stretched out to save, upon which we can lean while we are embraced. These are the hands into which we surrender ourselves.

3. "I commend"—I make offer, as a deposit and trust to God, the gift which He will keep for me. Christ was not merely waiting for God's call; He went forth to meet Him.

4. What is it we give? "My spirit." Not mere life only, not mere soul only, but the best part of our life, the best part of our soul—our spirit.

A. P. S.

LXXIII. The Resurrection of Christ. LUKE xxiv.

5. "*Why seek ye the living among the dead?*"

THE love with which the Saviour inspired the hearts of His disciples, especially the hearts of the meek women that followed Him, was not quenched by the many waters of His passion and His death. Let us journey to behold the place where they laid Him. Let us consider, first, the evidences, and, second, the purposes of the second life of Jesus—the life after the crucifixion.

I. As to the evidences of Christ's resurrection, there are both external and internal lines of proof which guard this great and sublime doctrine of the Christian faith.

Jesus Christ actually died. A million and a half of awe-stricken witnesses saw Him die.

The second fact in the series of proofs is that Christ was buried. Interment is not often granted to crucified criminals. But providence overruled the sordidness of the cautious Scribes and Priests, in order to multiply the witnesses to the resurrection.

The next fact, is that the sepulchre somehow or other was emptied on the third day. How came the sepulchre to be emptied? There are only two theories. The rulers

said the body was stolen out of it. The disciples said the body had risen from it. It is manifest that the enemies would not steal the body of Christ, and how improbable it is that His disciples should have done it. How could it have been done by twelve men against sixty, when Jerusalem was filled with an excited crowd, when the moon shone clearly in a cloudless oriental sky? No; it cannot be believed, and we are driven back therefore to the theory that He actually rose. The internal evidence is equally convincing. Consider the existence and the spread of persecution for the testimony as to the resurrection of Christ.

II. Consider the practical purposes which the resurrection is intended to work out in ourselves.

1. It is a manifestation, a vindication of ancient prophecy and of the personal character of the Messiah as well.

2. It is a seal of the acceptance of the sacrifice of Jesus, and by consequence of infinite moment to confirm the hopes of the world.

3. It is an earnest of our own rising, a pledge of immortality for the race for which the Second Adam died.

4. Look at the resurrection as an encouragement. There is a great error, brethren, in Christendom just now, and that is that we believe in a dead Christ: He is not dead, He is living—living to listen to your prayers, living to forgive your sins.

W. M. P.

LXXIV. The Sadness of the Disciples. LUKE

xxiv. 17. *"And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?"*

WHAT was at the bottom of the sadness of the disciples?

1. It was first of all the sadness of bereavement.

2. It was the sadness of mental perplexity.

3. It was the sadness of a forfeited object in life, of a shattered career.

Our modern world contains not a few of the disciples of Christ in name, downcast and sad, who are leaving Jerusalem as if on the point of giving Him up.

1. There is a sadness of mental perplexity. We are

always groping at problems, said Goethe. It is our risen Lord who offers the true solution to all our perplexities. He has a right to speak with authority, because He first of all died in the full daylight of His history, and then raised Himself from the dead.

II. The sadness of the conscience—the sense of our own sin—is not merely the reflection on definite acts; it is the perception also of a moral atmosphere at variance with the will of God. Our risen Lord reveals Himself to those who are weighted down by sin as pardoning it and blotting it out.

III. There is a sadness of the soul which arises from the want of an object in life to grasp by the affections, to be aimed at by the will. Our Lord's resurrection warrants us in living for Him as the supreme object in life, and this rescues us from the misery of an aimless existence.

H. P. L.

LXXV. The Discovery of Christ. LUKE xxiv. 30,

31. *"He took bread, and blessed it, and brake and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight."*

I. THE distribution of bread.

1. The old blessed intercourse between Him and them had not been put an end to by all that had passed.

2. The true idea of the relation which results from Him and His presence is that of the family.

3. Where Christ is invited as a guest He becomes the host. The Christ that is asked to come in order to receive, abides in order to bestow.

II. The discovery. Their eyes were opened, and they knew Him.

Where Christ is loved and desired, the veriest trifles of common life may be the means of His discovery.

III. The distribution and the discovery are followed by the disappearance of the Lord.

1. Because when Christ's presence is recognised the senses may be put aside. When He was manifested to the heart He disappeared from the eyes.

2. When Christ is discerned, there is work to be done. The vision of Christ binds us to work.

A. M.

LXXVI. The Gospel Proclamation. LUKE xxiv.

46, 47. *"And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day."*

It would be difficult to find in the word of God another paragraph which contains within itself more of the essential principles of the Gospel than that to which this text belongs.

I. The ground on which the Gospel proclamation rests : "It behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day."

There could have been no Gospel if there had been no Cross ; but the death, even of Jesus, would have had no efficacy for the removal of human guilt, if He had not risen from the grave. The one fact is invariably connected with the other in the Epistles. The honour of the law required a victim. We cannot tell how it came that only through such a sacrifice God could pardon sin. We admit that the whole life of the Redeemer on earth was sacrificial, but had His life-work on our behalf stopped short of Calvary, there could have been no redemption for us through Him. Men ridicule the preachers of "the blood," and tell us that we have outgrown such conceptions of the atonement ; but Paul was wiser than they are, and it was the doctrine of Christ Crucified which was in his hands the power of God unto salvation.

Three doctrines unite to form a trinity of Gospel truth :

1. The person of Christ as God incarnate.
2. The death of Christ as the Sacrifice.
3. The resurrection of Christ as the witness to the other two doctrines.

II. The substance of the Gospel message here described : "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name." It is a proclamation of the remission of sins. This pardon is 1st, Full ; 2nd, Free ; 3rd, Immediate ; 4th, Irreversible.

But it is not a proclamation of forgiveness alone. Two things, repentance and remission, are to go together. A man cannot have forgiveness and continue at the same time to indulge in sin. This mention of repentance is virtually

the same thing as that insistence on faith so constantly found in the New Testament. Faith is the Christward side of repentance. Repentance is the sinward side of faith.

III. The order in which this proclamation is to be made: "To all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." The reasons of "beginning at Jerusalem" were:

1st. To magnify the Divine mercy.

2nd. To secure a convincing illustration of the Gospel's efficacy.

3rd. To establish a principle for the guidance of God's people in all ages.

So the law is that our first efforts should begin in our own homes, "beginning at Jerusalem," but we are not to be content with working there. We must look abroad also "to all nations."

W. M. T.

LXXVII. The Ascension. LUKE xxiv. 50, 51. "*And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.*"

OF all places of scriptural interest, this solemn, strange, sabbatic Mount of Olives should be most visited by those who love the Lord; for He prayed, and preached, and taught, and loved, and wept, and agonized, and triumphed, all in connection with this Mount of Olives.

I. There are several attendant circumstances of the Ascension on which we may profitably dwell.

1. It was visible, palpable to the senses of every beholder. His crucifixion was public. His burial was public. His resurrection was public. So with equal publicity in the broad day, from a neighbouring mountain, amid the compass of a thousand witnesses, He ascended up on high.

2. The place on which it happened is worthy of our notice. We can imagine the feelings of the disciples as they took the familiar road, for they had often been to Bethany together. It was the chosen walk, hallowed by intercourse Divine; and there was a charm at the end of

it too, for in that village, darkened by its covert of olives, lived the family that Jesus loved.

3. We must not overlook the act during the performance of which He was lifted on high. He had mingled among the people, a moving, life-giving benediction. So He closed with blessing, and He blesses still.

4. He is an example as well as Redeemer.

II. The Purposes of the Ascension.

1. The personal results were, the publicity of the scene and the triumph of His entrance into His primal glory.

2. The representative results: by His exaltation our own race derives surpassing honour.

3. The mediatorial results: he received gifts for men. If we could pierce the secrets of the blessed presence, we should hear Him interceding, and see Him sending grace to the tempted.

W. M. P.

LXXVIII. The Lamb of God. JOHN i. 29. "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*"

THE phraseology is connected with the Old Testament teaching on sacrifice. Jesus is the antitype of Old Testament sacrifice.

He is the *Lamb of God*, because an ordinary victim could not take away sin.

He takes away the sin of the world, for the dignity of the victim gives all sufficiency to His atonement.

We use the text—

I. To direct the sinner to the source of salvation. He *taketh* away—a present thing; the *sin*—what troubles you; of the world—so yours is included.

II. To stimulate the Christian to earnest gratitude. Let us be stirred by the contemplation of the death of Christ on our behalf.

III. The text may serve as a pattern to the preacher of the Gospel. The Baptist always pointed away from himself to his Master.

W. M. T.

LXXIX. The First Disciples. JOHN i. 40-41. "*One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.*"

ANDREW, the open-hearted, the believing, the benevolent, should be the true type of all Christian brotherhood now. Can there be a finer pattern, save that of the Holy One Himself, to put before the Churches of the present day? He is presented to us in a threefold aspect.

I. Andrew is presented to us in the first place as the earnest seeker after salvation. His mind had evidently been prepared by a course of previous training. He was prepared to respond to the summons, "Behold the Lamb." He allowed himself to be hindered by no false shame or proud reserve, and was rewarded by arriving at the grandest conviction of his life. We must imitate him, not only in the open-heartedness of his character, not only in his freedom from prejudice, but in the indomitable earnestness which once upon the track of the inquiry fails not to pursue it to the end.

II. We see Andrew as a satisfied believer in Jesus, exulting in the consciousness of the discovered Messiah. There are two things which are presented to us here for our consideration: the open-heartedness and the satisfactoriness of Christianity. There is no disguise about Christianity—"Behold the Lamb." This is the essential difference between the false and the true in religion. Then, when we are asked to come and see, we may be sure that there is always something to be seen; that there is no delusion in the invitation, that there is no false promise in the summons.

III. Andrew is presented to us as the energetic missionary. He is eager to communicate tidings of the joy that has come to him, and he is fain to seek out the companion of his infancy, the partner of his daily toil, and invite him to share the blessing.

Contrast the two first brothers of the Old Testament with the two first brothers of the New.

W. M. P.

LXXX. The Son of Man and Heaven. JOHN iii.

13. *"And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven."*

THERE are three affirmations here of our Lord with respect to Himself that will be found full of interest and suggestiveness.

I. That He had ascended up to heaven. Not merely that He had been in heaven prior to His appearance in the flesh, but that having appeared in the flesh He had gone up thither.

He did not begin in a flood of light and certainty. He can sympathise with us in our questionings and strivings, our mental revolvings and acquiescings, in our pursuit of and progress in knowledge.

II. That He came down from heaven. In other words, He had risen while here to such profound perception of and intimacy with the heavenly, because He was of heaven, and had brought so much of the heavenly with Him. His extraordinary human attainments were due to His extraordinary Divine principle and inspiration.

It speaks also of the height from which He stooped, of what He gave up and surrendered, of the greatness of His Divine self-abnegation, and that contributed most surely to His great and high ascent.

III. He declared that He was then in heaven.

Surrounded by scenes of misery and wretchedness, by evil in a thousand ugly forms, by pitiable ignorances and despicable falseness, and grievous disorders, and suffering more or less continually from the reign of blindness and sin, He was still always in heaven, most restful and blessed amid all that He saw to pain Him, and down below all his burden and woe, he knew that God was in Him, and in Him for the reconciliation of the world.

S. A. T.

LXXXI. Faith and Unbelief. JOHN iii. 18. *"He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."*

JESUS CHRIST is here speaking of Himself, although in the third person. To believe in Him is to credit His word, to

place confidence in His character, and to accept for our personal benefit His varied services.

I. The believer not condemned.

He is not condemned, because Christ has appeared to put away sin; because faith in Christ identifies us with His sacrifice, and removes all personal guilt.

II. The unbeliever already condemned.

What does unbelief do? It despises the unspeakable gift of God. It dishonours the Son of God Himself. It refuses to listen even to God's testimony concerning His Son. The cause of unbelief must be evil. Unbelief is in spirit and in deed and in letter sin. Unbelief is the greatest folly. For neither is there salvation in any other. The sentence against unbelief has gone forth from the lips of the Judge. This sentence is confirmed by the conscience of the unbeliever.

I ask each of my hearers, as in the sight of God—Do you now believe?

S. M.

LXXXII. God a Spirit. JOHN iv. 24. "God is a Spirit."

So far as our knowledge goes, we know of the existence of only two substances—the one, with qualities that are known to us by our senses, we call matter; and the other, known only to us by conscience, is spirit. God is a Spirit, inasmuch as He possesses none of the qualities of matter, and is a living, sensitive, conscious, intelligent, voluntary being. God is entirely spiritual. He is confined to no material organization, has no part in material sins or passions. Several important and interesting facts follow from this truth.

I. God is invisible. We can see only that which is formed. It is no imperfection of our vision that we cannot see a spirit. The superstitious may dismiss their fears, for they never have seen, they never can see, a ghost.

II. God assumes no infallible form as the token of His presence—the form in which He abides. A form has limits, so it cannot be a form. A body infinite could not be seen, for it would have no boundaries to give it space. God cannot assume a material form, for it would confine Him in a portion of the universe.

III. God has occasionally assumed forms by which He is manifested most specially to some of His people. He appeared in the tabernacle, in a pillar of cloud ; He appeared to Moses in the burning bush ; He appeared to Isaiah and to Daniel.

IV. The presence of God is revealed in a personal manifestation in the humanity of Jesus Christ. He dwelt in the bush, He led Israel in the desert, He was the Angel of the Covenant, and in the Incarnation He became the invisible God. His body is assumed for all eternity, and it is not revealed that we shall ever see God in any form save in the face of Jesus Christ.

J. T. D.

LXXXIII. The Bread of God. JOHN vi. 33. *"For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world."*

NO miracle of Jesus excited or stirred the multitude like that of the feeding of the five thousand. It seemed to them a repetition of the ancient wonder of the manna, esteemed by the Jews to be the greatest miracle of the Old Testament. They sought to make Him a king, and when foiled in this by His sudden departure they still lingered ; and He preached that profound and spiritual discourse on the Bread of God which led many to leave Him for ever. The text contains all the "notes" of the Gospel of Christ.

I. The Bread of God is a Person. It is HE who cometh down from heaven.

The saints and prophets saw God everywhere. We see Him nowhere. We see instead force, uniformity, the laws of nature. But the soul cannot live on force or law ; it demands a person.

II. The Bread of God is supernatural. It cometh down from heaven. Words which on the lips of Christ always signify a supernatural origin and nature. Christ Jesus is the great supernatural fact of the Gospel. We gain nothing by the attempt to minimize the supernatural element in the Gospels. Jesus Christ remains a miracle on any theory.

III. The true Bread unceasingly comes from heaven. That is, the supernatural work of Christ never ceases. It is like the manna that fell every day fresh from heaven.

We are very prone to suppose that the supernatural energy of Christ was confined to His own life and to the early Church. But it is not so.

IV. The life is a gift, and a gift to the world.

The Jews found it hard to believe that it was a gift to the world. We find it hard to believe that it is a gift. If we could evolve it, or earn it, or deserve it in any way; but no! it must be a gift.

G. S. B.

LXXXIV. True Religion. JOHN vi. 37. "*Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.*"

THE whole Gospel is here in germ and type. All is but the outgrowth and the blooming of this seed.

I. Tried by this text, let us see what true religion is.

1. True religion cannot consist of any feeling of moral fitness. The words "him that cometh unto Me" imply the passage of dependence upon self to dependence upon another.

2. True religion cannot consist in the observance of any external ritual. "Come to Me," says Christ. The fruitful source of the corruptions of Christianity has been the constant tendency to put form for faith.

3. True religion cannot consist in a simple orthodoxy. "Come to Me," says Christ; "not to your shapely creed."

4. True religion is a living relation with the living Christ. If a man have the sun, he must have the day. If a man have Christ, he must have the Gospel.

II. In the light of this text, see the method of gaining this personal religion. It is coming to Christ. Jesus is strangely magnetic, and every man who feels his need, who knows he cannot help himself, and is sure that Christ can help, and just asks Him,—that man comes, and in Christ gains the whole blessing of the Gospel.

III. As suggested by this text, behold the proof of the possession of the true religion. That proof does not consist in an old experience carefully preserved and laid away in

memory, nor in a present release from the fear of death, nor in a present fervent glow of feeling. It consists in just this, the present proneness of the soul upon these words of Christ, "I will in no wise cast out."

W. H.

LXXXV. Apostacy. JOHN vi. 67. "*Will ye also go away.*"

I. WHY do people go away? Because the Gospel is offensive to human nature and revolting to the pride of the creature.

Some leave Christ being terrified by persecution.

Some forsake true religion out of sheer levity.

Multitudes are tempted aside by evil companions.

Many leave Christ for the sake of sensual enjoyments.

Many leave Him on account of change of circumstances.

Some turn aside from Christ and His people out of sheer laziness.

Unsound doctrines cause many to apostatise.

II. Those that go aside, what becomes of them? If they are God's children they cannot be happy. They begin to remember their first husband. They return, but they are never the same again.

III. Why should not we go away, as they have gone? If we are left to ourselves, I cannot give you any reason. If we would be preserved from falling we must be schooled in humility and kept very low before the Lord.

C. H. S.

LXXXVI. Christ's Call to the Thirsty. JOHN vii.

37. "*In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink.*"

THESE are bold words, and they would be as false as they are bold if He who speaks them were no more than a man. All human need, all human desire are expressed in this one word, thirst. I will now speak of different kinds of thirst, and try to show how coming to Jesus Christ, and how **only** such coming, will quench and satisfy.

I. The thirst for happiness. This may be called the commonest, lowest of all. If any man thirst for happiness, let him come to Jesus Christ and drink. He may come with nothing but nature's craving, with nothing beyond a great longing, a dumb desire. If it is not a spiritual desire at first, coming to Christ will make it so.

II. The thirst for righteousness. A man coming to Christ begins to thirst for personal rectitude, for conformity of heart and habit and life to the holy will of God. God sent Jesus to save us, how? By turning every one of us from our iniquities. His righteousness is in us as a principle, and upon us as a robe.

III. The thirst for love. This desire may fall back upon itself and does; or it may shrink back and yearn and pine in the lonely heart; but satisfied it cannot be unless it finds the fountain and the fulness and the flow of love in Him. His love sanctifies, ennobles, fulfils all other.

IV. The thirst for life. This thirst is profounder, vaster, more awful. Back from the dark realm of eternal oblivion the living soul recoils and cries for life. On towards the realm of life it stretches wherever that realm may seem to be. Ah, but where shines the sun that never sets? Where rolls the pure river of life eternal? Who can give us this stupendous faith in life—future eternal happy life? Who but He who is the Life—and who brings life and immortality to light by His gospel. Will you try to live on without Him? Are you so in love with misery? Is the covenant with death so dear?

A. R.

LXXXVII. Literalism and Party Spirit. JOHN

viii. 59. "Then took they up stones to cast at Him." JOHN

xix. 7. "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die."

THE prevailing motive which led the Jewish people to the dreadful crime of our Lord's crucifixion, was the one fixed idea of devotion to the law of Moses. "We have a law"—a law delivered amidst Sinai's thunder, a law which is the type and centre of all law—"And by our law He ought to die," because He made Himself the Son of God. They little imagined when they thought themselves to be the

just avengers of the law, that they were destroying Him to whom all the law and the prophets bear witness. This crime was not the result of rash innovation or of undue precipitation, but the result of a fixed adherence to existing usages, and of resistance to change in every form. It teaches us that there are times when such a frame of mind is not a sign of a humble mind, but a mark of audacious and reckless presumption.

I. This is the one signal example of the truth that enormous evils may flow from carrying to excess one idea, however good. In the story of the Crucifixion we may see reflected the acknowledged evil of narrowness of purpose, idolatry of single principle. Common sense is the one salt which alone can save such exaggerations from their own corruption.

II. This aspect of the Passion brings before us the value of those feelings of common humanity, the milk of human kindness, which resist all efforts of the hard logic, or dry reason of man to set them aside.

Nothing could be more complete than the arguments by which the purposes of the Jewish priests were sustained, but within and above them all they might have seen a pathos of suffering, a tragedy of life and death, to which nevertheless they were wholly insensible, but by which the world has since been moved to sympathy. This is a general condition of our lot on earth. Always on the one hand is the rude, ruthless, adamant exhibition of inexorable logic; always on the other are the pathetic, inexhaustible emotions which spring up from the depths of human nature.

A. P. S.

LXXXVIII. The Light of the World. JOHN viii.

12. *"I am the Light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness."*

It was early morning and the Lord had come in from the Mount of Olives to the Temple Court, where He sat teaching the multitudes that thronged Him. What a marvellous assertion He makes here! "I am the Light of the world." It is one of the I AM's by which again and again Jehovah revealed Himself through the manhood of Christ.

I. These words suggest the purity of the Lord's personal character. A ray of light is the clearest thing we know. It is undefiled and undefilable. Through the most polluted medium it comes out as immaculate as when it entered. This purity of Jesus was not merely a negative thing. It consisted not so much in the absence of all sin, as in the presence of all excellence. Still through all the centuries Jesus stands challenging investigation,—“Which of you convicteth Me of sin.”—and still even the Pilates who laugh at the very idea of truth are constrained to say “We find no fault in Him at all.”

II. They suggest the brightness of the revelation which He made. “That which doth make manifest is light.” And we see how His advent chased away darkness, and brought new truths to view. He has brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel.

III. They suggest the beneficent influences that radiate from Christ. There are few natural agents more valuable than light.

1. It ministers largely to health.
2. It contributes materially to happiness.
3. It contributes to our safety.

And from “the Light of the world” soul-health, soul-happiness, and soul-safety are derived.

IV. They suggest how we become partakers of the blessings which Christ brings. As we are enlightened by opening our eyes to the light, so we are to become illuminated by the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. We must open our eyes to behold His glory, our intellects to receive instruction, our hearts to let Him in to our affections, our lives to let Him rule our actions. Here our great duty is to be simply receptive.

We take in the light, but that is not enough; we must follow it. We must ever keep our faces to Christ, as the heliotrope to the sun, and soon all shadows shall fall behind us.

W M. T.

LXXXIX. The Faithful Witness. JOHN viii. 18
"I am one that bear witness of myself."

I. OUR Lord affirms that He Himself is a witness to His own mission.

1. He meant this to apply to the manifest Deity that shone through all His actions.

2. Christ is a witness of Himself in the extraordinary purity of His character.

3. Our Lord's teaching in doctrine and precept bears witness to His being sent of God.

4. He bears witness to Himself in that wherever He comes He brings peace.

II. What then?

1. It is here, ye seeking ones, that Christ will redeem you.

2. It will be in the future what He says it will be. There is a heaven of everlasting joy. And, alas! it is all true on the other side of the testimony.

C. H. S.

XC. The Darkest of Deaths. JOHN viii. 24. *"For if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins."*

THESE words were spoken by our Lord to men who seemed determined by the maddest of all rejections of mercy to make their own salvation a matter of sheer impossibility. We have here—

I. The darkest of all deaths—dying in one's sins. It is not merely to be struck dead in a particular action, as Lot's wife was. It is—

1. To die in their company. A man's sins have walked with him from youth, they have kept near to him through manhood, and now he has to die with them. Can you bear the thought of having your sins going with you to the frontier of time, and then, when you cross the line into eternity, having the same sins going with you there.

2. To die in their guilt. One unpardoned sin is enough to sink a man to perdition—think of the sins of a whole lifetime.

3. Sometimes it means to die in the power of sin. It is

terrible when men at the last hour wake up to the consciousness that they are dying in their sins.

4. To die in their doom. As the tree falls so it must lie. When the last breath is drawn the man and his sins have to be together to all eternity.

II. What leads to that darkest of deaths. Some say, "This applies only to those who lead vicious lives." But it is not said, "Those that commit the grossest sins of the flesh shall die in them." It is not said, "The harlot, the profligate, the drunkard shall die in their sins." Nothing more than unbelief is required to ruin you through all eternity.

Unbelief is the condemning sin because it is a sin against the Divine provision for salvation.

A. G. B.

XCI. The Absolute Sinlessness of Christ.

JOHN viii. 46. "*Which of you convinceth Me of sin.*"

IT has sometimes been inferred from the context of these words, that "sin" here means intellectual rather than moral failure. But the word here translated "sin" means moral failure throughout the New Testament, and our Lord is arguing from the absence of moral evil in Him generally, to the absence of a specific form of moral evil, namely, falsehood. Neither does this question challenge the detective power of our Lord's Jewish opponents and not declare our Lord's absolute sinlessness.

I. Is sinlessness abstractly possible? To be human is to be sinful. "There is none righteous, no, not one." But this general experience is not really at variance with the existence of an exception to it. That God should have given man the capacities for improvement which he possesses, points to a purpose in the Divine mind of which we should expect to see some typical realization. Now, all that we know about our Lord goes to show that He was sinless. This impression was produced most strongly on those most in contact with Him.

II. The sinlessness of Jesus has been said to be compromised by the conditions of the development of His life as man. Sometimes by acts and by sayings recorded

of Him. He "learned obedience," which implies a time when He was morally imperfect. But a progress from a less perfection to a greater is not to be confounded with a progress from sin to holiness.

It is argued that the temptation of the Lord implies a minimum of sympathy with evil incompatible with perfect sinlessness.

But so long as the will is not an accomplice the temptation does not touch the moral being itself.

III. The sinless Christ satisfies a deep want of the soul of man—the want of an ideal. Christ is also the true Reconciler between God and man. And thus as our ideal and Redeemer from sin and death, Christ is the heart and focus of the life of Christendom.

H. P. L.

XCII. The Night Cometh. JOHN ix. 4. *"I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work."*

LIKE other sayings of Jesus, this utterance is, in one sense, solely appropriate to Himself, in another it is applicable to each of His brethren. In two respects He uses these words as none else could.

I. He is taking a survey of His whole earthly career. Not merely the past, but the future is before Him. We are unable to foresee. We cannot forecast with certainty. But our Lord was master of His destiny.

II. In these words Jesus unveils a consciousness of the solitary greatness of His worth. Much there was in His life in which He is our example to the end of time; but by His work He means emphatically His work as the Mediator. In these sufferings and struggles He stood alone among the sons of men, conscious of His unique relationship towards the Father and towards His brethren.

III. Our Lord's words do express a conviction and a law which should govern every one of our lives—which do govern every consecrated life—a conviction of the shortness of the day of work—a deep sense of the duty of making the most of it. Men and women sometimes talk of expedients for killing time, as if time would never end,

and there was no eternity beyond it, and no serious obligation to make the most of it—as if the day of life had no setting sun, and there were no night to succeed its evening. May God teach us one and all what it is to live—to have a work within our souls and without them to do in this life, and to have an account to give of that work.

H. P. L.

XCIII. The Recovery of Sight. JOHN ix. 25. *“He answered and said, Whether He be a sinner or no, I know not. One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.”*

I. WE have here a change. This change was radical. There are no two states more different than the state of the blind and the state of the seeing. Is there not an analogy between the state of this man and the condition of spiritual blindness as common to us all.

Again, this change was divinely effected. Human healers might succeed in cases of casual obscurity. No power but the Divine could give sight to the born blind.

Again, this change was wrought by simple and prescribed means. God does not supersede means, but He vitalizes them. It is so in the matter of salvation.

II. There is here a testimony given. When a change takes place like this a testimony is a necessity.

1. This testimony was experimental, and similarly we testify of conversion as a real change.

2. This testimony was consistent and sincere. The witnesses of the grace of God when they do not bear false witness are equally consistent and sincere. Their testimony is borne under all sorts of circumstances and under every pressure. When have not those faithful witnesses spoken? In reproach, in affliction, in death, the witness of God's faithful people has gone upwards to the skies.

W. M. P.

XCIV. The Good Shepherd. JOHN x. 11. *“I am the Good Shepherd.”*

WHEN our Lord calls Himself the Good Shepherd, is He using a title which has lost its value since He has ceased to live visibly upon the earth? This title has a true

meaning for Christians, and an attractive power which is all its own. To enter into the full force of this image, we must know something really of ourselves, and something really of our Saviour.

I. As the Good Shepherd, He knows His sheep. He knows us individually, not merely as we seem to be, but as we are. It is because He thus knows us that He is able to help, guide, and feed us.

II. He has a perfect sympathy with each. He is not a hard guardian, without any sort of feeling for our individual difficulties, yet this sympathy is guided by perfect prudence. The Great Shepherd has proportioned our duties, our trials, our advantages, our drawbacks, to our real needs, capacities and characters.

III. He is disinterested above all, as the Good Shepherd. He seeks not ours, but us. He gains nothing by watching, guiding, feeding such as us. He gave His life for the sheep. He gave it once for all eighteen centuries ago; but His death is just as powerful to deliver us from the onset of the wolf as then. Self-sacrifice such as that on Calvary does not lose its virtue by the lapse of years.

H. P. L

XCV. The Good Works of the Gospel. JOHN X.

32. *"Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from My Father; for which of those works do ye stone Me?"*

LET us look at some of the good works of this Gospel of Christ; and if we mark them thoroughly, we shall find that they are as convincing as any miracle.

I. The regeneration of individual men. Men have never yet been able to keep themselves from becoming worse. But the power of the Gospel has effected this.

II. The elevation of the family. It is capable of the clearest proof that Christianity is the only thing that has given purity and loveliness to the household.

III. The inauguration of efforts for the amelioration of the condition of the masses of mankind. The Lord Jesus has taught the universal brotherhood of man.

IV. The securing of civil liberty for the people. Where-

ever it is generally believed, the Bible is the great friend of freedom.

Why then oppose the Gospel? Shall we be content merely with forbearing to oppose the Gospel? Must we not in consistency go further, and accept it for ourselves?

W. M. T.

XCVI. The Tears of Jesus. JOHN xi. 35. "*Jesus wept.*"

ON three occasions during His life on earth, we read of Jesus weeping. First, when He visited the bereaved sisters of Bethany, next when He wept over the city, and last when He wept in Gethsemane.

I. Jesus wept in sympathy for others.

1. It is not sinful to weep under bereavement.

2. The Christian mourner may always count upon the sympathy of Jesus.

3. When our friends are mourning, we should, like Jesus, weep with them.

II. The tears of Jesus over the Holy City were tears of pity. They suggest to us two things.

1. The responsibility of privilege. Much had God done for the nation of Israel.

2. The pity of the Redeemer for the lost.

III. The Redeemer's tears in Gethsemane were tears of suffering.

1. Christians should expect suffering.

2. Do not imagine that you are weak and rebellious under trial because it makes you weep.

3. Let us learn in suffering the benefit of prayer.

W. M. T.

XCVII. The Stone. JOHN xi. 39. "*Jesus said, Take ye away the stone.*"

GOD never performs an unnecessary act. Jesus, though omnipotent, never spoke an unnecessary word nor performed an unnecessary deed. Our Heavenly Father never does directly what He could do through others. In view of this permanent law of the universe, I call you as Chris-

tian men who love your dead brethren, to come with Jesus to their grave and consider the stone at the mouth of their sepulchre. He will bring them to life ; but He says to you—"Take away the stone." Let us consider some of the stones it is possible for us to remove.

I. The stone of indifference. Your friend has no care for religious subjects. Make him feel that nothing is so foolish, so ruinous as to ignore God and the spiritual world. Show him that you are sensible and quick to all that pertains to the great surrounding and underlying spiritual realm.

II. There is the stone of scepticism. Men doubt and hesitate, and this is better than indifference. Doubt means some attention ; doubt means that the soul has not settled on wrong. Let your faith help your brother's scepticism. Show him that Jesus has patience with the bruised reed and the smoking flax.

III. Another stone is unbelief in Christ because of unbelief in Christians. Search your own soul. You may be truly Christ's, and yet there may be something in your disposition or manners, that perpetually perplexes onlookers and keeps the force of the Gospel from their hearts.

IV. The heaviest stone is the indulgence of some vice, and no vice so stands in the way of the progress of the Gospel as the vice of intemperance. Give your earnest efforts for its removal. Watch yourselves. However safe you may be, watch for others.

C. F. D.

XCVIII. The Attractive Power of Christ Crucified. JOHN xii. 32. "*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.*"

IF these words had stood alone in the Gospel, it would have been natural to understand them as referring to our Lord's ascension. But St. John adds : "This He said, signifying what death He should die."

In St. John's eyes the cross is not a scaffold, it is a throne ; and Christ's death is not His defeat, but His victory. Lifted up on that throne of victory, He will exert a world-embracing attraction.

I. Let us ask, wherein consists the attractive power of the crucifixion of Jesus?

1. The moral beauty, the moral strength of self-sacrifice draws men in reverence to Him. Sacrifice is attractive because it requires a moral effort of the highest kind, and because of its verity, and again because of its fertilizing power. To witness sacrifice is of itself to breathe a bracing atmosphere.

2. The prevalence of suffering in human life, attracts men to Jesus crucified. Pain is the inseparable attribute of human life. It comes to all of us sooner or later. And we need the present sympathy of a human heart which can whisper, "I too have suffered, I can feel for you."

3. The deep sense of sin in the conscience of humanity attracts to Jesus crucified. The common custom of sacrifices diffused among races the most diverse, expresses a truth recognised instinctively by man—the sense of sinfulness.

II. We have here the one real principle of unity in the human family. How various are the interests of human life, how divergent its aims, how deep its divisions! And in religion what divisions exist! The will of the Divine Saviour is, "That they all may be one." The Cross was the focus of the spiritual world, by which Jew and Gentile, heaven and earth, would for ever be reconciled, drawn together by the force of a transcendent love. They who own the power of that Supreme attraction must needs, as the blood of sprinkling drops upon them from the wounded hands of love, endeavour to secure unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

III. If men are to be united to each other by attraction to a common centre, they must be drawn one by one.

The problem of life is simplified for time and eternity, when a soul determines to know in thought, feeling and practice, only Jesus Christ and Him crucified!

H. P. L.

XCIX. With Christ. JOHN xiv. 3. "*That where I am, there ye may be also.*"

WE ought to love these words, not so much for the exceeding delight it will be to us to be with Christ, as for the

delight it will be to that dear Saviour to have us with Him. Very pleasant it is to knit our joy to His, and His joy to our joy, and to find them inseparable. If there be on earth a legitimate selfishness, it is the aspiration after the unclouded presence of our Divine Master. The steps by which we go up to it are—the death of Christ, which gives the right to be hereafter in heaven; the resurrection of Christ, which removes the obstacles; the ascension, that gives pledge and earnest of a place there. The work of the mediatorial empire follows, fitting the soul to the place and the place to the soul.

Then will arrive the Second Advent, to give effect and manifestation and reality to it: "I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself."

There is great comfort in that word "if." As sure as is the fact of the ascension and of the setting up of the mediatorial throne, so certain is the return and the union. The whole passage is calculated to place in their right proportions the hope of meeting our loved ones in heaven and the all-satisfying anticipation of being with Jesus Christ. Some are afraid of making to themselves a carnal heaven by dwelling on the idea of knowing and loving one another above, but the mistake is that we do not connect and identify the saints with Christ. He is not complete without His members, He being the head and His people the body, so that you cannot know Christ apart from His members. We do not know much about the unseen world, but in our text lies the nearest approach one can make to the idea of glory. What happiness there is even here in the sense of Christ's loved presence, and how much more in heaven!

Be much with Jesus now, to be prepared to be with Him where He is. What meekness, wisdom, humility, purity, and tenderness, have we to learn before we can be meet to stand before His throne! Yet the preparing time is growing short. So let us live at Christ's side, drawing nigh to Him in holy confidence, and so grow like Him.

J. V.

C. Life through Christ. JOHN xiv. 19. "*Because I live, ye shall live also.*"

OUR subject is a deeply mysterious one, life. What we all want is to live livingly, and most people feel that they are not living up to the intention of their being. So long as there is this sense of the interval between the life a man lives and the life he might live, there will never be any real rest. Nothing really lives which does not live in its integrity, that is in all its parts. So that if a man's body and mind and affections live, but if his soul does not live, that man can never live in the happy feeling of a full life. There must be something for eternity in his life. There is a difference between life and the energy of life. Living energetically renders a man happy. Unless the soul be right with God, and the inner life be busy for God, neither the feelings, nor the understanding, nor the outer life of any man can ever be what it ought.

I. The connection between the life of Christ and the life of every Christian. "Because I live, ye shall live also." We live because Christ died and redeemed us from a state of death, and thus made us capable of living. We know that His death is the fountain of our life, because God, in raising Him from the dead, gave an assurance that He had accepted the atonement. So we live in the sweet sense of life, and that comes to pass "Because I live." The power to live was given at Calvary, but the sustentation of that life is due to the glorified life of our interceding Saviour. He watches over us, works in us and for us, intercedes and sends us continually the Holy Spirit. It is because He lives that we can live. Through sacraments, and means of grace, and the silent influences of Divine power, communications of life flow into a believer's soul, and his real feeling is, "I live, and yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

II. The effect that life is intended to have upon the believer. To as many as have indeed put on Christ, this life is a resurrection life, and the question to be asked is, "Is our present sojourn the counterpart of that interval of Christ's life between His resurrection and ascension?" These forty days were busy days, full of activity, and one is struck with the earnestness, fervour and intensity of our

Lord's words in this period. He was as a man under the continual conviction that life was short. Here is our lesson. Again, He was always in the attitude to go ; and again, work for God was the thought which He was always impressing upon others. This also is our lesson. Full, earnest, on the wing, loving, holy, set to the great object of the extension of His Father's glory, this was the mode of that life of which Christ speaks when He says, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

J. V.

CI. The Comforter. JOHN xiv. 26. *"The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost."*

CREATURES with an experience like our own specially need two things. They need that the consequences of their own wrong-doings or misdoings should be capable of retrieval. They need also that power and strength such as theirs, so untrustworthy, yet charged with such vast interests, which so often go wrong, yet which must learn to go right unless everything is to be lost, should be assisted and fortified for good. The remedy for the sin of the world is the life and sacrifice of the eternal Son of the Father.

I. The aid for man is the Eternal Spirit. Like the Divine remedy, it is not only a Divine influence, or endowment, or gift, or power, it is a Divine Person. This was the great revelation of the last days of our Lord on earth. This is the clear and constant teaching of the New Testament. In Him we have a real Person to assist us, who understands, who feels, who cares, who loves, who holds all power to help ; who, if we pray, joins with us in intercession with plaints unutterable.

II. We cannot translate this great truth into the language of sense, of sight, of daily experience. We are called to run our course as if we were running it alone, and yet with the consciousness that we are not alone ; that we have something over and above the general care of God in the world ; that One is ever beside us whom the mind of man cannot comprehend, but who, to the humblest of Christ's servants, is the secret of their hope and steadfastness.

III. What a change it would make in the lives of many of us if we realized this Divine Gospel mystery. Irreverence, all formal worship, unsettled moods of feeling, selfish, loveless isolation would all disappear.

R. W. C.

CII. The Purposed Incompleteness of Christ's Teaching. JOHN xvi. 12, 13. "*I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.*"

THESE words of our Lord have a double significance. They teach us a great truth about Christian doctrine; they teach us one or more serious duties in the Christian life.

I. These words show us that our Lord's own teaching during His earthly sojourn did not embrace all necessary Christian doctrine. A man who should think himself a good Christian for keeping only to the words of Christ, would deceive himself. The text states clearly that over and above Christ's actual teaching there were truths to be taught in His name and authority which, as coming from Him although through others, Christians were to receive and believe.

II. Our Lord's teaching was completed by that of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord gave the germs which the apostles, as mouthpieces of the Holy Spirit, expanded into doctrines. When the Spirit of truth had come, He guided men into all truth, and especially as to the Divine Person of Jesus Christ.

III. The reason why our Lord's teaching was incomplete, incomplete according to His own will and announcement. The same motive which led Him to teach men at all, led Him to impose these limits, restraints, and delays upon His process of teaching. He taught men gradually, because He loved men too well to blind them by a sudden blaze of truth. He knew what was in man, and did not expect them to be able to receive a full revelation all at once. Like the sun He rose gradually amid the mists of imperfect apprehensions as to who and what He

was, and not until He was high in the heavens did He permit the full truth to break upon the intelligence of the world.

The practical lessons are—

1. That the true principle of religious and secular education is that there should be gradual teaching.

2. Up to our last day God is teaching each of us through the events of life. He has many things to say to us which we cannot bear as yet; but He knows when life's deepest lessons will be most needed by us. We have only to listen for His voice, and to obey it.

H. P. L.

CIII. The Mutual Glorification of the Son and Spirit of God. JOHN xvi. 14. *"He shall glorify Me: for he shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you."*

THE distinction of Persons in the Godhead is pure matter of revelation. Reason, left to itself, could never have argued the existence of more than one Person in the Godhead.

I. The mutual glorification of the Son and Spirit of God. In setting forth the mysteries of the present dispensation, the Son puts forward and glorifies the Spirit; while the Spirit, in His turn, puts forward and glorifies the Son. In His last discourses our Lord engages the minds of His disciples with the Comforter, who was to supply His place. He gave them no encouragement to do what they actually did, follow Him with their eyes into heaven; on the contrary, He threw the eyes of their minds forward to the advent of the Comforter. When the Comforter came, He testified of Christ. "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you." So the sermons of the apostles in the Acts are simply testimonies of Christ.

II. The lessons of doctrine and of example to be drawn from this fact.

1. Let us not overlook the clear testimony we have to the distinction of the Persons in the Godhead.

2. We live under the dispensation of the Spirit. Are we cherishing His gracious influences so as to nurse and develop into its full stature the new life within us?

3. Let us not so unduly exalt the connection of the Holy Spirit with the present dispensation, as to throw the teaching and example of the Saviour into the background, and to regard them as superseded.

4. An example is given us by the mutual glorification of one another by the Persons of the Trinity. The marvellous self-concealment of these Divine Persons, their display of one another, teaches us to go and do likewise. God's philanthropy is one of self-concealment. Man's philanthropy is one of self-display. Let us pray for deliverance from the love of human praise, and seek the honour that cometh from God only.

E. M. G.

CIV. The Work of the Spirit. JOHN xvi. 15. *"All things that the Father hath are Mine ; therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you."*

THERE is an office of the Spirit very important, and on which Christ laid great stress on the eve of His departure—that of a Revealer or Declarer of the things of Christ.

I. The Holy Spirit is the Manifestor of all things. Christ's work was a complete work—every debt was paid, but there was needed the Holy Ghost to "show" it to the sinner.

See how this truth takes its place in the great doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Everything that is, is, and ever was, the Father's. All power, love, wisdom, grace, and peace. As soon as Christ died for man, God treasured up everything He had for His creatures in the person of Jesus. He is the depository of the whole property of God for the Church. The Spirit, who is at once an actual part of Jesus and an actual part of the believer, sharing His nature, and combining Himself with our own, communicates all God's good things to us. Many have no sense of peace and forgiveness who are striving hard after them. Yet Christ has finished their salvation ; but until the Spirit reveals Himself, they can no more perceive it than Hagar the water at her feet in the wilderness, or Elisha's servant the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire. There are times when the most familiar passages of the Bible

wake up to us like a new creation, invisible things become realities, and future promises are present property. This is the Spirit's work.

II. What the Spirit manifests He makes a possession. He manifests a covenanted treasure, and seals it to us with the oath of Almighty God. There are many rich, glorious things waiting for the believer, just behind a little veil, which only want the revealings of the Spirit to be bright with power to the mind. The reason why some have made great attainments in Divine knowledge is not because of a great intellect, but because they have glorified the Spirit, and He has shown them more. Remember that apostles, with their three years' walking with Christ, could not understand the simplest parts of His teaching, till the Holy Ghost fell on them at Pentecost. Taking the mind of Jesus, He made it theirs; and the same Spirit is hovering over us, willing to do the same for us. Cherish His still movings, cultivate the revealings of the Holy Ghost.

J. V.

CV. No Want in the Presence of Jesus Christ.

JOHN xvi. 23. *"And in that day ye shall ask Me nothing."*

THE subject is Christ's personal presence removing the necessity for prayer. Why does Christ's personal presence in heaven, now that He is risen, ascended, and glorified, take away altogether the necessity for prayer in the cases of the glorified?

I. Because God is in Christ, and God is an open Fountain of good to every being in friendship with Him. Who asks for water when standing at the very brink of a fountain? Who asks for light when the summer sun is shining on them?

II. Because Christ's love for His disciples is such that He cannot be with them without filling them with good. When a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, walking through the path of His humiliation, He could never be with His disciples without blessing them. How much more now in His state of glorification! We justly glory in His cross, but we have an equal right to glory in His crown.

III. Moreover, the ministrations of the Saviour when

our hearts are right, as they will be very soon, cannot fail to satisfy us. At present even God the Father of us all does not satisfy us. He does not give us wealth fast enough, or temporal blessings in abundance enough. When we are free from sin, what God does for us will perfectly satisfy us.

IV. Because prayer can only be made in want. There is a state where prayer is unsuitable. In such a state are the unfallen angels. Prayer is the cry of spiritual infancy, the call of helplessness, and the wail of sorrow.

Let us anticipate joyfully the future, and by the power of hope bring its sunshine into the present.

S. M.

CVI. Peace in Christ. JOHN xvi. 33. *"These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace."*

THE purpose of all the words and works of the Redeemer was to bring men to true and abiding rest.

I. Christ's desire and design is that His people should have peace. It is not presumption to have peace through faith in Him.

II. The peace which Jesus wishes His followers to enjoy is of a peculiar sort—"that in Me ye might have peace." It is not that of unconsciousness, it is not that of self-confidence, it is not that of ritual observances, it is not that of exemption from earthly trouble. It is peace from union with Himself. Not only peace from Him, but peace in Him.

III. The manner in which we are to obtain this peace is attention to the words of Christ. Peace does not come in any mystic manner. It rests on the words of Christ. We must read them, seek to understand them, believe them, and obey them. When we are in Christ, we are in Him that is true.

W. M. T.

CVII. Sanctification by the Truth. JOHN xvii. 17. *"Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth."*

IN this great and truly sacerdotal prayer Jesus intercedes for His apostles and His Church, and prays that they may be sanctified by the truth. By sanctification He meant,

not purification from sin, but the consecration of the free will. The supreme self-consecration of the will of Jesus on the cross fixes the ideal of Christian sanctity. By "Thy truth" He means a certain body of facts about God and the highest interests of men.

I. Revelation of the truth sanctifies by putting before us an ideal of sanctity. Revelation unveils to us an ideal of holiness altogether above ourselves in the nature and character of God. In Jesus Christ we possess, as in a concrete form, this ideal. By thus giving the world the record of one life spotless and consecrated, the truth does sanctify those who desire to be made holy, and who, fixing their eyes on this one typical form of excellence, pray to be made like to Jesus.

II. The truth sanctifies by stimulating hope. It gives every man a future. There is, he knows, another world, another life—and between this and that there are opportunities. With this belief a man has a motive power which will make him desire to be holy. To live hereafter to any purpose at all, is to live at the feet of One whose very name is an incentive to sanctification.

III. The truth sanctifies as being a revelation of the love of God. Love has a power of making men holy. "We were made nigh by the blood of Christ." The death of the incarnate Son is the measure of the love of God. "Sanctify" is the response which the heart makes to unmerited mercy. It is the generous resolve not to be at least untouched by love. Every true Christian knows that his creed moulds his life. In his soul faith and practice are inseparable. If we know anything of the sanctifying, elevating, inspiring power of truth, must we not desire that others should know it too? The Saviour is pleading now as of old, "Sanctify them," not merely for His apostles, but for the millions for whom He shed His blood.

H. P. L.

CVIII. A Plain Question. JOHN xviii. 17. "*Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?*"

THIS was a direct question. There was no getting past it. Outspoken and defiant even in his sin, Peter faced up to the inquiry, and said in reply, "I am not."

Every critical occurrence in our history comes to a point in this question. In fact, the life of each of us, whether we are conscious of it or not, is an answer to this question. There are four possible replies.

I. There are those who say "Yes" when they ought to say "No." This is hypocrisy. Those who belong to this class are loud in their professions, and if there were no other day in the week than the Sabbath, and no other place than the church, they might pass without suspicion. But when you follow them into the world, you hear the denial, "I am not," as emphatically as you heard the "I am." The life appears to be cut in two.

II. There are those who say "No," and say it truly. This is avowed ungodliness. Such persons live thoughtlessly: sometimes are guilty of positive wickedness; and even when they are not immoral, their excellence is only negative. They say, "We do not profess"—as if the enmity were less guilty because it is admitted!

III. There are some who say "No" when they should say "Yes."

1. Some give that answer to the world. Like Peter, they yield to the fear of man. They act under the blind impulse of panic. Remember that your fears are for the most part imaginary. Peter in this case was in no danger.

2. Sometimes the answer is given to the Church. A real disciple says, "I am not qualified to be a Church member." But modesty may be pressed to such an excess as to become disobedience.

IV. There are those who, being disciples, answer "Yes" on all days, in all circumstances, and in all places,—and that is Christian steadfastness.

W. M. T.

CIX. Truth. JOHN xviii. 38. "*What is truth?*"

THIS question of Pilate is in the air to-day. It is repeated on every side and in every department of intellectual pursuit. What is the spirit in which it must be asked to obtain a reply?

1. It must not be asked in Pilate's spirit, in scepticism and sceptical indifference. Such a spirit is wanting in the very first element to secure success.

II. He who would receive an answer to this question must ask it in the spirit of an earnest seeker and votary of truth. He must not only wish to have truth on his side, but to be on the side of truth.

III. He who would receive an answer to this question must ask it in a spirit of willingness to follow it, to obey its voice, to submit to its guidance. Men, it is to be feared, are too often afraid to know the truth, lest it prove a hard master. The surest way to keep men in unbelief is to keep them evil in their lives. Then unbelief becomes their interest, for the truth would rob them of their cherished sins.

IV. The decay of faith in Christianity has another cause in our day. It is the utter neglect of the words of Christ. It is an age of marked indifference to the study of Scripture among the masses. Everything, alas! takes the place of this. The romance, the magazine, the newspaper, are the only intellectual food of millions, and much of that a poisoned diet. The words of Jesus are in the air amid the confusion of tongues. Yet he who searches them will find their divinity. Unto him truth will appear, not in a philosophy, nor in a dogmatic system, but in the Person Jesus, Son of God and Son of man.

B. C.

CX. In the Garden with Jesus. JOHN xviii. 26.
"Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?"

I. THESE words are fitted to remind us of the strong claims which Jesus has on our love and service. In the garden agony was endured such as the earth has never witnessed.

II. The question is fitted to remind us of the privileges we have enjoyed from Christ.

Peter was one of those chosen to accompany Him as far as man could go into the depths of His anguish.

III. The question is fitted to remind us of the protestations of attachment which we have made to Christ.

IV. The question is fitted to remind us of the fact that even the ungodly expect a certain conduct from those who have been with Jesus in the garden.

Do not imagine you can escape by making no profession.

W. M. T.

CXII. It is Finished. JOHN xix. 30. "*It is finished.*"

A SPECIAL interest belongs to every place that the Saviour visited on earth, but the most hallowed spot of all is Calvary.

Three of Christ's seven sayings on the cross are addressed to men, and three to God, while the seventh is a solemn soliloquy, "It is finished."

I. These words indicate that there was a feeling of relief in the Redeemer's mind now that He had reached the last of His sufferings. The shadow of the cross fell over His very cradle; and even amid the glories of His transfiguration, He spake of the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. But it is over at last. The cross has been endured now for the throne.

II. These words indicate a grateful satisfaction that He had finished all He had designed to do. Of this experience we know nothing; for no matter when our lives shall end, our work will be very far from being a finished thing.

Nothing was left undone by Christ, His life was a finished thing.

III. These words indicate an expression of triumph. It is done; the prince of this world is cast out, the power of sin is broken, the sceptre of death is snapped asunder, and even the dominion of the grave destroyed.

IV. The inferences which follow from this interpretation of the text.

1. We must conclude that Christ's sacrifice was perfect if His work was finished.

2. If Christ's work was perfect, then His sacrifice needs no repetition.

3. If Christ's sacrifice is perfect, no other ground is needed by the sinner for acceptance with God.

4. If Christ by His death vanquished all our enemies, we need not fear what they can do unto us.

Lift up your hearts and rejoice in the finished work of your once crucified but now risen and reigning Lord.

W. M. T.

CXII. The Piercing of the Saviour's Side.

JOHN xix. 34. "*One of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.*"

I. EVEN after our Lord's death men rudely assailed Him. We too, after His death, have pierced Him by hypocrisy, by unbelief, by carelessness.

II. These attacks on the Saviour are overruled to display His grace the better. The heart of Christ was opened by the spear, and often the heart of truth is revealed by the opposition brought to bear against it.

III. Since the soldier sent his spear into the Saviour's heart, the way to that heart is open. It was always open; but now we can see it.

IV. The wound in Christ's side reveals the heart of Jesus in its preciousness, blood to pardon, water to sanctify.

C. H. S.

CXIII. The Tears of Mary. JOHN xx. 13. "*Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto Him, Because they have taken away my Lord.*"

THERE is reason in the tears of Mary. Tears, they say, are wont to be unreasonable, but Mary Magdalene knew well why she wept before the empty tomb.

I. Her tears show her strong and tender love for Jesus. This affection was not a thing of yesterday. The Lord had rescued her from sin and shame. He had cast out of her seven devils. Now, early on the day of the resurrection, she is first at the sepulchre. Her soul was on fire with the moral power of a strong and pure affection, which was to be rewarded presently by the attainment of its object.

II. They express her bitter disappointment. There is no reason for thinking that Mary hoped for more than did the apostles. They expected to find Jesus in His grave, so did she. And to find the grave empty was terrible. All that she cared for had been buried in that rocky tomb.

III. They express persevering resolution. "I know not where they have laid Him." She does not mean to give up hope and inquiry. No; He must be somewhere, and she will persevere. Her disappointment does not overmaster

her love. It is to a temper of this sort that Jesus reveals Himself. In Mary Magdalene that old promise was made good, "They that seek Me early shall find Me." Mary waiting before the empty tomb of Jesus reappears in each generation of Christians. She is the type of those souls which have a genuine love of religion, but which are for a time disappointed in it. Be earnest like her in seeking Christ, and you will surely find Him. Do not despair because for a moment the spiritual sepulchre seems to be empty. Mary was so bitterly disappointed because she loved, but it was her love which in the end forbade despair, and the promise of our Lord stands, "If any man love Me, My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make our abode with him."

H. P. L.

CXIV. Peace. JOHN XX. 19. "*Jesus stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.*"

THIS was our Lord's fifth appearance on the day of His resurrection. He came to the upper room unexpectedly, the disciples knew not how, and gave them the customary greeting, "Peace be unto you." The invocation of peace at the beginning or close of intercourse was of high antiquity, and also in our Lord's day all the Semitic nations used it as a matter of course. Jesus did not scruple to use the conventional phrase, but He does not use it conventionally. He picks up as it were, from the roadside, the common words and phrases which fall from men as they saunter unthinkingly through life. He restores to language its original power. What would have been the sense suggested to the apostles by those words "Peace be unto you"?

1. It did not suggest peace with the Jews without. Peace with the Jews was only to be had by surrender of the honoured cause of Christ.

2. It did not suggest peace among themselves, for this was not needed, there being yet no division amongst them.

The primary effect of Christ's blessing of peace on the disciples was the conquest of fear. His blessing breathed safety, and their fears assuaged.

Christ's blessing conferred freedom from inward tumult.

I. It solved the disciples' mental perplexity. "They had trusted that it should have been He that would redeem Israel," and upon this state of mind the arrest, crucifixion and burial of their Master came like a thunderbolt. A dense gloom settled down on all their hopes. The sight of Jesus risen from the grave restored order into that world of thought. There was no longer an apparent contradiction between the word of God and the verdict of experience. This is still Jesus' work in the world, He brings with Him intellectual peace.

II. It restored the object of their affections. They had felt the void of an aching heart; but when He appeared, "I have found Him whom my soul loveth, and will not let Him go," was the feeling of each disciple, and that feeling in itself was peace. Only one Being satisfies the affections, so that the soul's peace is ensured beyond risk of forfeiture.

III. It re-formed all their former plans for action and for life. The disciples had been a prey to all the miseries of hopeless inaction.

IV. In seeing Him they saw a career again open itself before them. Christ's blessing restored peace to the soul, because He gave the sense of pardon for sin.

H. P. L.

CXV. The Doubt of Thomas. JOHN XX. 27, 28.

"Then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God."

I. LET the Master first engage our attention—the Master in the presence of the unbelieving disciple who has treated Him with no little presumption and rashness. How exquisitely touching His gentleness, what patience He showed with Thomas. How matchless was His condescension. After He had overcome the sharpness of death, and been exalted to the throne, He unrobed Himself to gratify Thomas. How wonderful was His bounty.

II. A few words about the servant.

1. The words of Thomas were an expression of faith.

2. They were like the cry of a dove that at last has found its mate.
3. Was there not a joyous astonishment in these words?
4. Did not Thomas by this exclamation renew his trust in Christ and his consecration to His service?

C. H. S.

CXVI. Our next Duty. JOHN xxi. 22. "*Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou Me.*"

AT the instant when Christ spoke these words, we see Peter moving away with Jesus from the side of the lake. Jesus had just said to him, "Follow Me," and he was keeping close to Him as He walked, as if to show how entirely he accepted both the spirit and letter of the injunction. There is an interest about those we love, which is the surest sign of spiritual life. A person really "following" Christ is never content to follow Him alone. Peter, seeing John, saith to Jesus, "Lord, and what shall this man do?"

From the tone of our Lord's answer, there must have been a curiosity about John's spiritual state mixing with Peter's question.

There are two very opposite habits of mind, to each of which, however, these words of our Lord administer some rebuke.

1. Persons who are often asking for some sentence to be pronounced about the spiritual condition of some friend, forgetting that we are not to sit in judgment upon the state of a fellow-creature's soul.

2. Persons who are anxious about the religious welfare of loved ones—what God will do for them, through what experiences He will guide them—forgetting that they are far dearer to God than they are to you.

The true repose is to throw the mind back upon the sovereignty of God. "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee." The force of the sentence lies in its indistinctness; but Christ must have had either of two meanings—that John's life might be prolonged to the Second Advent, or that he should survive the taking of

Jerusalem, which was often called Christ's coming. There is a reproof here to those who are drawn into speculative views of unfulfilled prophecy. The thought of our Lord's coming, must always be the real horizon in every believer's prospect. But guard against the dreamy gazing out into the future, which incapacitates for present duty. They are the happiest "who shall be alive and remain" at the glorious Advent, but the question is not whether we go to Christ, or Christ comes to us, but am I following the Lord. He could point back from where He stood to His whole life, and say of every step, what no one else can ever say, "Follow Me." This command of our Lord is a personal thing, a real individual concern for every one's soul. The secret of all happiness and holiness in either world is to place, as God has placed them—close, indivisible, one—that "thou" and that "me." "Follow thou Me."

They who have followed Him here in the cross-bearing life will be they who shall "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."

J. V.

CXVII. Power from the Holy Ghost. Acts i. 8.

"Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you. And ye shall be witnesses unto Me."

I. THE reference is to the Holy Ghost. Do we dwell sufficiently on His work and office. He is the originating power of the ministry, and it is His perpetuated grace by which the ministry is crowned with success.

II. Those who receive Him and live under His influence will come in possession of power. Of all God's attributes men are most covetous of power. He is the source, and the only source of the gift of power.

III. The purpose for which this gift of power is communicated, is that the Church may testify to the world. It is to be used for Divine ends. Wherever God gives power, there is use and motion for that power. The truth as it is in Jesus, imperial in the past, the ages have not dawned yet upon the fulness of its triumphs.

W. M. P.

CXVIII. The Inevitableness of Christ's Resurrection. ACTS ii. 24. *"Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it."*

THIS is the language of the first Christian Apostle, in the first sermon that ever was preached in the Church of Christ. In it St. Peter argues that Jesus had really ascended into heaven, because He had first really risen from His grave. Listen to what the Apostle says about a subject upon which his opportunities, to say nothing of higher credentials, qualified him to speak.

I. St. Peter states the fact of Christ's resurrection. "Whom God hath raised up." Remember He was preaching in Jerusalem, and to some who had taken part in the crucifixion. It was then to persons keenly interested in the subject, and who could test the exact truth of what He said, that Peter states thus unhesitatingly the fact of the resurrection.

II. The reason he gives for the resurrection. "Because it was not possible that He should be holden of it." And his grounds for saying that it was a Divine impossibility are—

1. Jewish prophecy forbade the Christ to remain in the grave. "For David speaketh concerning Him." The Jews believed in the reality and in the compulsive force of prophecy, and so as to the principle of the argument, there would have been no controversy.

2. The character of Jesus. The leading feature of our Saviour's character was its simple truthfulness, and He had again and again said that after dying, He would rise. Sometimes He used a metaphor to express the meaning, and sometimes He alluded to ancient Hebrew history, for instance Jonah, as a parallel, and to His disciples He thrice says plainly that He shall rise again.

3. He was the "Prince of life." How could the very Lord and source of life be subdued by death. If for reasons of wisdom and mercy He subjected the nature which He had made His own, to the king of terrors, it was not in the course of nature that He should be held in the grave when His object was achieved.

III. This necessity points to kindred necessities which affect His servants and His Church.

1. The necessity of Christians rising again. As He is so are we.

2. Here is the principle of the many resurrections in the Church of Christ.

3. A real resurrection with Christ must leave some mark on the life. "Like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

H. P. L.

CXIX. Salvation in None Other. ACTS iv. 12.

"Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

THESE words were uttered by St. Paul representing the young Church of Christ, when, for the first time after her foundation, she stood face to face with the hostile power of the world. When the cripple was healed at the Temple the Jewish world roused itself in earnest. St. Peter here makes a positive assertion that Jesus Christ—His name—that is Himself—brings salvation. What kind of salvation?

I. First of all—though not chiefly—salvation from physical discomfort and pain. Jesus was the real worker of the cure of the cripple. It was as much His work as any one of the miracles that had been wrought in the days of His earthly life. He did what He does at this moment by the generous hearts, by the kind hands, and cultivated understandings, of those whom in hospitals and elsewhere He guides to the relief, to the cure of bodily pain. His precepts, His charity, His unseen but Divine energetic Spirit—these are the true sources of the best inspirations of our philanthropy.

II. It meant the particular salvation which the Messiah was to bring—the salvation to which Israel as a nation was looking forward. Israel was the real cripple after all, and her rulers knew it. The Roman conqueror had broken

its limbs, and the nation lay bound, prostrate and powerless. The political salvation implied, as in the result it always does, a moral and spiritual salvation. Israel must be saved by Jesus or it would perish.

III. Salvation means here the saving from moral ruin and death of the separate souls of men. Salvation in its deepest, in its one legitimate sense, is the rescuing of single souls from present sin and future misery. Jesus Christ saves men and women from the very depths of iniquity. He washes out the sin of a guilty past. He gives new desires, new aims, new hopes, new enthusiasms. He inspires a hatred for the very garment which but now was spotted by the flesh, and thus He renews, little by little, by His Eternal Spirit what His enemies have destroyed.

H. P. L.

CXX. The Fulness of the Spirit. ACTS iv. 31.

"They were filled with the Holy Spirit."

LOOK wistfully at the circumstances under which the Spirit works.

I. The Spirit of God will not work where He is not recognised. We must have faith in His power, in His promise, and His living agency.

II. The presence of the Holy Spirit is for the most part richly enjoyed when there is united prayer.

III. The Holy Spirit will only work in a Church where they are harmonious and at one.

IV. The Spirit of God will not bless that Church with heavenly endowments which aims to hoard up its temporalities instead of laying out its substance in the cause of the Master.

V. The Church which seeks the power and presence of the Holy Ghost must be holy in character and obedient to the heavenly counsels.

C. H. S.

CXXI. The Success of Christianity, an Argument for its Divine Origin. ACTS v. 38, 39.
"Refrain from these men and let them alone. for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

THESE words of Gamaliel have been lauded on the one hand as the very embodiment of deep and mature wisdom; and on the other have been stigmatized as the utterance of a mean and time-serving selfishness, which waits till the fortune of parties is decided, and then casts in its lot with the strongest.

Whatever judgment we pass upon the character of Gamaliel, there can be but one opinion as to the soundness of his reasoning. We may suppose that the Holy Spirit presided over this good counsel of Gamaliel—the most favourable that could have been given for the infant Church.

I. The success of the Gospel of Christ is an argument for its Divine origin.

1. The success of the Gospel has been wide and extensive. The spread and hold of the Gospel is a truly wonderful fact, when we consider its scanty beginnings, and forlorn prospects. From the number of one hundred and twenty, its nominal adherents have multiplied into many millions.

2. This success has been inward and radical. Its works praise it in the gates. The men whom it raises up have a stamp truly Godlike. Compare the martyrdom of Socrates with that of Stephen and you will say that while the face of the one shines like that of a man, the face of the other shines like that of an angel.

3. This success is prolonged and renewed. The vitality of Christianity is most impressive—often dying but it is not yet dead.

II. Some objections to this argument.

1. False religions have had great success in the world. But the spread of these false religions has been far more limited than that of Christianity, and they have had no inward success.

2. Christianity has not become universal. Had all men

become Christians, it is urged, we would have acknowledged the finger of God. But this would limit the power of God, and would suppose that He cannot reveal Himself to one without revealing Himself to all.

III. Some inferences which follow from the success of the Gospel.

1. It is a tribute to Christ's glory.
2. It is a source of comfort to the Church.
3. It is a motive of conversion to the unbeliever. There is nothing so mournful as to be at once on the wrong, and on the losing side.

J. C.

CXXII. The Last Request. ACTS vii. 59. "*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*"

I. MAN'S supreme concern should be the wellbeing of his spirit.

1. Because his spirit is immortal.
2. Because his spirit will be for ever what death finds it.
3. Because his spirit has been Divinely purchased.
4. Because his spirit is capable of endless progress.

II. Man is approaching a crisis in which he will realize the importance of his spirit. Since this is so, two duties obviously devolve upon us.

1. To employ the best means for meeting its requirements.
2. To conduct the business of life with a view to its solemnities.

III. Man knows of one being only to whom he can safely entrust his spirit. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," must be the importunate entreaty for all who are concerned for its eternal safety.

IV. Man alone is responsible for the eternal condition of his soul. We make our own heaven or hell, not by the final act of life, but by life itself.

J. P.

CXXIII. The Death of Stephen. Acts vii. 6a.

"And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

THIS was the close of the last scene in a brief but great career. Stephen, the first of Christian deacons, the first of Christian martyrs, had heaved his last sigh. He fell asleep. It was a solemn and triumphant moment, not for himself alone, but for the future of the Church of God.

I. Stephen is remarkable as a Christian teacher of original power. He consecrates beneath the eyes of the apostles the gift of religious originality. There is an important distinction between originality and invention. In the things of God invention is profane. Stephen preached no new gospel, but he gave prominence to one element in the common faith. He maintained that the Divine favour and presence were no longer to be identified with the Jewish temple and ritual, and in this consisted his originality.

II. Stephen was a man of great force of character, of great practical capacity. As such he was chosen one of the seven deacons of the early Church.

This force of character was not simply natural. His strength was given him by the eternal Spirit. "Full of the Holy Ghost."

III. Stephen was the first martyr. The idea of martyrdom as the highest form of moral courage, as the crowning achievement of a noble life, is a creation of Christianity. It grew out of the idea of the inviolate sanctity of truth, based on the conviction that there was in possession a truth which was worth costly sacrifice. Where Stephen is greatest he is most easy of imitation. In one measure we can all of us suffer for the Divine cause among men. The eloquence of endurance is the most persuasive of the Church's gifts, and every servant of Christ may, by God's grace, share in it.

IV. Many persons think if they were something else than they are they would do a great deal of good.

I. They say if they could command a long term of years they could do much for the Divine cause. They are young, and they have no time at their disposal. Reflect that Stephen was a young Christian of only a few months old, and probably in age a youth also.

2. They say if only they were in a higher and more influential position, then they would work. Stephen was only a deacon, with the sacred twelve above him, and yet he does a great work. Shedding his blood joyfully for His master, Stephen shows that faith in an incarnate and crucified God should ever mean for Christians, "If He has done so much for me, what can I do for Him."

H. P. L.

CXXIV. Cornelius. ACTS x. 34, 35. *"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him."*

THE incident teaches us :

I. That Christianity can eradicate the most inveterate habits.

II. That the propagation of Christianity has been developed by human instrumentality.

III. The true method of expounding Christianity. Peter's sermon is full of Christ.

IV. The connection between human agency and Divine power.

1. Human agency is not self-sufficient as to spiritual results.

2. Apart from the word there must be a distinct Divine influence.

J. P.

CXXV. Preaching the Gospel. ACTS xi. 20, 21.

"And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spoke unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them ; and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord."

THUS simply does the historian tell one of the greatest events in the history of the Church. It is believed that we see here the first extension of the message of salvation to pure heathens.

I. Note the spontaneous impulse which these men obeyed.

The coals were scattered from the hearth in Jerusalem by the armed heel of violence.

Such a spontaneous impulse is ever the natural result of our own personal position to Christ.

True kindliness of heart creates the same impulse. We cannot truly possess a treasure for ourselves without pity for those who have it not.

Loyalty to Christ has a similar effect. When we are true to our Lord we shall feel that we cannot but speak up and out for Him.

II. This incident suggests the universal obligation of all Christians to make known Christ. These men were not officials. They had no command or commission from Jerusalem. The work of telling Christ's love to men belongs to every one who has found out for himself or herself.

III. Observe the simple message which they proclaimed. They preached Jesus as Lord from their own personal experience.

They spake. It was no set address, no formal utterance, but familiar natural talk to ones and twos as opportunity offered. It matters not whether the cup be gold or clay if it has in it the water of life.

IV. Notice the mighty helper who prospered the work. This is the keynote of the book of Acts. It is our encouragement when we are despondent, our rebuke when we are self-confident, our stimulus when we are indolent, our quietness when we are impatient.

How little any of us know what shall become of our poor work under His fostering care.

A. M.

CXXVI. Cleaving to the Lord. Acts xi. 23.

"Who, when he had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord."

I. WHAT Barnabas saw. The grace of God. Perhaps in miraculous forms, but perhaps in others. Wherever grace is made visible by its appropriate manifestations we are to see and own a brother. As Augustine said, Where Christ is, here is the Church.

It used to be an axiom that there was no life in the sea beyond a certain limit of a few hundred feet. But the *Challenger* put down her dredge four miles and brought up healthy, good-sized living beings. Let us not draw arbitrary limits to the diffusion of the life of Christ among men.

II. What he felt. He was glad. It was a triumph of Christian principle to recognise the grace of God under new forms and in so strange a place; a greater triumph to hail it with rejoicing. Do we rejoice in the works of the grace of God outside our Churches and communions? Let gladness be the temper with which we see the graces of Christian character lifting their rich blossoms in any corner strange to us, and breathing their fragrance over the pastures of the wilderness.

III. What he said. That with all purpose of heart they should cleave to the Lord.

The Lord is the sole object to be grasped and held. The sum of all objective religion is, Christ; the sum of all subjective religion is, cleaving to Him.

It is a distinct gain, that all men feel more than before that all revelation is contained in the living person of Jesus Christ. Round the story of His life the final struggle is to be waged. The foe feels that so long as that remains all other victories go for nothing.

1. Let us cleave to Him by reiterated acts of faith.
2. Let us cleave to Him by habitual contemplation.

A. M.

CXXVII. The Man of Macedonia. ACTS xvi. 9.

"And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us."

THE passage of the Gospel from Asia to Europe was a marked epoch in the early history of the propagation of Christianity. The results of it have been very important to the Church and to the world. It was an occasion worthy of supernatural interposition. It is the only time after St. Peter's mission to Cornelius when God introduced a miracle to guide the course of missions.

I. The Divine call. "Come over and help us." Whoever "the man of Macedonia" may have been, who appeared to Paul at Troas, it was God that sent him, with His own message.

The people who most need Christian influence are not the persons who ask for it. Here was the Divine call taking the form of those who needed to be taught and converted, and which spoke in them, and for them, what they themselves would never have heard. There are many who do not invite us to care for their souls, but Christ is interested for them, and the more they are indifferent we should see Him and hear Him personating them: "Come, and help us."

II. The cry for help. "Help us." There is in every living creature a feeling, consciously or unconsciously, which looks out for "help." It is a true and a blessed name for Christ and His truth, "Help, help," and it matches with the void and the impotence of every man's soul. Once consent to stoop to be helped, and the work is half done.

III. How we can answer the cry of heathenism, "Come over and help us."

There is a power abroad in this world to which nothing is really an antagonistic force but Christ. That power develops in heathenism into idolatry, darkness and fanaticism. We have the remedy, which is the simple truth as it is in Jesus. Before it, in Macedon, Lydia's heart was opened, and the jailor's iron-bound soul burst its fetters. If, having the remedy, we dispense it not, then how can we escape that ancient malediction, "Curse ye Meroz, because they came not to the help of the Lord."

J. V.

CXXVIII. The Unknown God. Acts xvii. 23. "*To the unknown God.*"

I. HEATHENDOM'S confession of the unknown God. Whatever the human intellect could do for man had been done in that proud city. On the most vital of all matters the human intellect was dumb, helpless, despairing. How sad this confession was. Could anything declare **more** eloquently the awful wretchedness of heathen men.

II. The worshippers of the unknown God. To this altar all classes of Athenians came; the Epicureans, the Stoics, the Platonists, the Cynics, the Sceptics, all found themselves as distant from the true God as ever.

III. The revelation of the unknown God.

1. Paul revealed the hitherto unknown God as Creator.

2. Paul revealed the unknown God as the Father of men.

3. Paul revealed the unknown God as the Saviour of men.

4. Paul revealed the unknown God as Judge.

Notice how the revelation was received. There were the undecided; there were the decided.

A. M. F.

CXXIX. A Call to Repentance. ACTS xvii. 30.

"God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent."

GOD gives us, to begin with, some simple test by which to learn how far we have mastered the alphabet of repentance, and then when we have learned the rudiments, our Divine Master, pleased with our progress, will remove us into a higher class, and unfold to us the deeper truths of the great science of repentance.

I. There is our money. We take our Bible, and we open it, and look out what is the proper proportion of our income which ought to be laid as a kind of firstfruits at the feet of our King. Of course we make up our mind to do that for the future, but we do more. We look back upon the past, and restore to the Lord that which we should have given Him in bygone years. We may have to disturb some of our investments, but sooner or later the debt must be paid.

II. Our time, our duty to God, takes precedence of our duty to our neighbour, however important the latter may be. The kind of work varies according to the ability, and to all the word is spoken. This beginning to work is only the lowest step in the ladder of repentance. Has it been taken?

III. Lastly, there are certain sins for which our conscience condemns us, and certain duties to which each of

us is urged by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us. Let the cord, whatever it be, be cut to-day that binds you to the kingdom of Satan and separates you from life, light, and joy, and peace in believing.

G. H. W.

CXXX. Christ and Evil Spirits. ACTS xix. 15.
"Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?"

I. THE character of Christ is studied by evil spirits. The apathy of men respecting the character of Christ may well be rebuked by the thoughtfulness of devils.

II. Virtue is respectable and vice despicable even in hell. Jesus was the perfect example of virtue. Paul had obtained a supernatural power to expel devils; but Satan laughed at the professions of the exorcist.

III. Artifice cannot charm the devil out of humanity. Whatever accessory means are employed, Satan cannot be expelled but by the Spirit of God.

IV. God employs devils to humble the arrogance of wickedness.

J. A. M.

CXXXI. The Sorrow that arises at the Departure of a Christian Minister. ACTS xx. 38.
"Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship."

THESE words close this farewell scene between the Apostle Paul and the elders of the Church at Ephesus. It is a final parting between a minister of Christ and the people among whom he has laboured, and their feelings and conduct are here described.

I. The source of this sorrow. As one element in it there was—

1. The loss of a true friend. Next to the assurance of having the best Friend in heaven, is the conviction that we have a true friend on earth. A Christian minister should be this: the monitor of some, the comforter of others, the friend of all his flock.

2. The close of religious privileges.
3. The recollection of numerous changes which the departure suggests.

II. The comfort of this sorrow.

1. The sorrow for a lost friend has this comfort, that to him it is immeasurable gain.
2. Sorrow for the close of religious privileges has this comfort, that results from them may still remain.
3. Sorrow at the recollection of numerous changes has this comfort, that they are preparing the way for a world that is immutable. Let every departure become to me an argument that a higher life is at hand, a portion of the drift-weed from the farther shore, which assures the voyager that a new world is near.

III. The improvement of this sorrow.

1. Christian sorrow for the departed should lead us to seek re-union with the object of our affection.
2. It should lead us to cultivate what they had most at heart while with us. Empty sorrow for the dead is a worthless tribute. Let us translate our grief into a warm appreciation of the excellencies, a sympathy with all that was great and noble in their heart, and active duty in carrying forward their Christian plans and purposes.

J. K.

CXXXII. Paul's Preaching. ACTS xxiv. 24. "*Concerning the faith in Christ.*"

THIS was Paul's one subject. When did he discourse upon any other? How did Paul treat his subject? Did it contract or expand in his hands? It seemed to be a sentimental subject, but really it was the most practical of all subjects, for it branched out into righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. That is the true view of the faith in Christ. Practical preaching is evangelical preaching. So a noble life is a Gospel life.

I. Paul's was personal preaching; and it was addressed to Felix.

II. Paul's was practical preaching; it treated of righteousness.

III. Paul's preaching was alarming preaching; Felix

trembled. The best preacher may have a bad hearer. Do not blame the pulpit. Hearers may become used to the most powerful and exciting preaching. Felix often sent for Paul. Even trembling may become a habit. Beware.

IV. Paul's was argumentative preaching; he reasoned.

J. P.

CXXXIII. Paul's Conviction. ACTS xxvi. 9. "*I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.*"

SINCERITY is nothing in itself, though it is much boasted of. Great thinkers may be false thinkers. Intellectual vigour is no guarantee for moral certitude.

I. This text throws light on some aspects of Paul's character.

1. Paul's self knowledge. His old self was a perpetual memory. He always remembered his former sins, ignorance, and bigotry.

2. Paul's candour. No excuse, no mitigation even when he sees he did it ignorantly. He also says that he did it in unbelief. A right view of one's self is essential to conversion.

3. Paul's conscientiousness. "I ought to do." Conscience is no argument. The rights of conscience is a force which may be used fallaciously. Conscience is to be enlightened, or it may be the most tyrannical of all powers.

II. This text throws light upon the Christian argument. In some cases its historical appeal may be lost, its miracles may be ignored, its organised testimony may be disbelieved. The most difficult man to convince is the ungodly righteous man.

J. P.

CXXXIV. What it is to be a Christian. ACTS xxvi. 19. "*Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.*"

THESE words are truly noble and triumphant. St. Paul is looking back and remembering the brightest point of all his life, in which his life not only took a new departure, but began to move in a different direction and became

verily a new life. Everything a man does that is worth the doing comes to him in the first place in some kind of vision. As we look back on our lives we can all see that visions have been shown us, and the difference between men in this world, more than in anything else, is not in the visions God has given them, but in the way they are obedient or disobedient to them.

I. The vision of the Christian life is Christ the Master. St. Paul, when the heavens opened on the way from Jerusalem to Damascus, had a vision of the crucified and risen Jesus; when he recognised the vision he became obedient to it. The personal obedience is the Christian life—the personal submission to One who has shown how worthy He is of our obedience. The Christian recognises the life of Jesus Christ as the pattern of the life into which he is to be shaped by his continual obedience to Him.

II. It is not an unnatural thing to become a Christian. The rescuing a soul and bringing it to Christ is simply bringing it back into a life to which it naturally belongs, and out of which it had wandered. The Saviour's teaching is that man belongs to God, and that the coming to God is the coming back to God from whom we have departed. The children of God have wandered from Him, but are His children still.

III. The Christian progress. It is to be obedient to every heavenly vision. Obedience sets the seal upon a revelation given us by the Master, and then upon that sealed revelation some new light shall come, which a new obedience shall seal. So, every obedience new light, and every light new obedience, as if they were the stairways which led up to heaven and the soul goes on till it is made perfect in Christ's image. This Christian life is the glory of all life, for no man is a man till he is Christ's. It is only he that has at last the other vision of the golden streets and the river of the water of life.

P. B.

CXXXV. Providence in the life of Paul. Acts xxviii. 14. "And so we went toward Rome."

THESE words are connected with a wonderful chapter of providences in the history of Paul.

I. We have the accomplishment of a long-cherished purpose by the Apostle. From an early date in his ministry his heart had been set on visiting the Imperial City. He did not waste his strength on places of small importance. In the economy of work he deemed it best to give himself to those fields that would most speedily reward his labour. If our consuming longing is for usefulness and not for our own honour, God in the end will give us our heart's desire.

II. Paul's purpose was not attained precisely in the way in which at one time he had expected it would be realized. He did not dream of entering the Imperial City as a prisoner. So we set our hearts on the attainment of some post of usefulness, and we get it ultimately, but it comes accompanied with something else of which we had no thought—something which effectually keeps us from pride.

III. Though Paul's entrance into Rome was not quite what he at one time expected it would be, yet it really accomplished all he desired. Let no one undervalue his position, but use it, bonds and all, for Christ. Let us struggle on with faith and prayer, for we shall either reach Rome or something better.

W. M. T.

CXXXVI. Paul a Debtor. ROM. i. 14. *"I am debtor both to the Greeks, and barbarians; both to the wise, and the unwise."*

PAUL was a teacher from the supreme conception which he had of the obligation of those who had special gifts of power or grace entrusted to them of God to use those gifts and employ that grace for the benefit of others. He had the knowledge most necessary of all to personal welfare. And he had it not merely to rejoice in it, but that he might impart to others who were still destitute of it. He had also eminent gifts and experiences of grace for the proclamation of the truth, and he felt that these laid him under proportionate obligations. There are some lessons which follow.

I. What reason the poor and the weak always have to bless God for the Gospel. It reverses as far as its power extends the ordinary tendency of the human will, under

which the feeble are the prey of the strong, and those without resource are depressed and oppressed.

II. What a beautiful civilization it is which the Gospel contemplates as its result in the world—a civilization, the key of which is in this doctrine that weakness confers right, and power simply imposes obligation.

III. The test of the progress of Christian civilization in the world is, how far do the Church and society recognise their obligations to the weakest and the poorest.

IV. Here is the practical test of our individual Christian experience—"How much have I of the feeling of Paul toward those around me?"

R. S. S.

CXXXVII. Not ashamed of the Gospel. ROM
i. 16. *"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ."*

IN the Apostle's days there were some things about the Gospel which might seem things to be ashamed of. It emanated from Judea, and the Jews were a hated race. It told of salvation through One who had been crucified. It proclaimed that the Crucified One had risen again. There are still nowadays people who are ashamed of the Gospel.

1. We have no need to be ashamed of the evidence by which the Gospel is supported. The glad tidings which Paul loved to proclaim were of Divine origin.

1. The historical proof of the Divine origin of the Gospel.

2. It is also proved by prophecy being all fulfilled in Christ.

3. The moral argument by which the Divine origin of the Gospel is attested. Christ was not a development of His generation. Think of the perfection of His intellectual and moral greatness, and say how that could have been the creation of His times.

II. We have no need to be ashamed of the intellectual calibre of those who have been the chief representatives of the Gospel of Christ. Some of the greatest names on the historian's page are those of the ensign-bearers of the cross.

III. We have no need to be ashamed of the effects which the Gospel has produced among those and through

those who have accepted it. It has revolutionized the character of individuals—it has elevated and purified domestic life—it has stood between class and class as the good Samaritan of society—it has laid deep and broad the foundations of civil and religious liberty. These are things to glory in. To all the blasphemies of her assailants the Gospel may make reply in the words of her Divine Master: "Many good works have I shown you from My Father; for which of these do ye stone Me?"

W. M. T.

CXXXVIII. The Power of the Gospel. Rom. i.

16. *"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek."*

PAUL was not a mere declaimer. He gave to the haughty Jew and the philosophic Greek the most conclusive reason for his noble avowal.

The subject is, the Power of the Gospel. What does the Gospel profess to do? Has the Gospel been successful? In what does its power lie?

I. What does the Gospel profess to do? It professes to save from the wrath to come all who believe in it. Its chief grand aim is to lift up the ruined moral nature of man and make it as holy as God is holy, and therefore fit it for the songs and services of the eternal. To understand the nature and magnitude of this work, look at the condition of unsaved man. It is enmity against God, and that is the hardest thing to overcome. Knowledge does not tame this enmity. The man himself cannot do it. Nothing takes it away but the power of God.

II. Has the Gospel been successful? It has. It has done all it professes to do, not on a few, but on many; not upon one class and that the best, but upon all classes, even the worst. See what it has done in England, how it has changed Madagascar, how it has transformed the Sandwich Islands, how it has warmed the heart of many a dweller amid the eternal snows. To-day it is as powerful as ever. It will slay any sinner's enmity now as sharply as it slew Saul's on the way to Damascus.

III. In what does its power lie? In many things, and in this among others—it represents God in a very vivid way loving the sinner. We are always attracted and overcome by love. The Divine Father looked down on the only Son He had, dying. If you have in your heart the slightest enmity against God, think of this.

Then the power of the Gospel lies in this too: it is accompanied, when preached, by the Divine Spirit.

A. MCA.

CXXXIX. Abraham the Father of the Faithful. ROM. iv. 11. *"That he might be the father of all that believe."*

I. ABRAHAM'S faith. What did he believe?

1. He believed in God, and a mighty article of faith that is. He separated himself. He reposed on Him more than on the great empire of the world—more than on the bright light of heaven worshipped by others—more than on tribe or kindred. He made God his Rock, his Shield, his Refuge, and his Protection.

2. Abraham believed the great promise of the covenant—"In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The man who heard these wonderful words in the mysterious, awful calm of an Eastern night, pondered them well, weighed them every syllable. He searched into the meaning of the words, and the Spirit helped him; and through them he saw the flashing of the coming day. He saw the Messiah in them.

3. His faith reached beyond the present world. His mind stole away from the tent and thought of the eternal city. So Jacob said, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord."

II. The effect of this faith on Abraham.

1. Through faith he had acceptance with God. It was accounted to him for righteousness. He was received, approved, justified. When we are united to Christ, all good is made possible to our nature.

2. Through faith he became a good, a great, and a noble man. We know that he was not perfect. To err is human.

But think of him with Ephron the Hittite, and when there was strife between the shepherds.

3. Through faith he became the father of the future Church. What a glorious name it is—father of the faithful. What an immense family then was his. Multitudes like the falling drops of rain—like the stars of heaven. It was night—and the deep blue Eastern heavens contained countless stars. From horizon to horizon the stars were thick as wild flowers in a meadow. “So shall thy seed be.”

T. J.

CXL. The Love of God Shed Abroad. ROM. v. 5.

“The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

I. GOD’S love to man is poured out upon the heart, and the consciousness of it, not the response I make to it—that is a secondary thing—is what makes the Christian. The love of God has been shed abroad. The difference between a man who is a Christian and one who is not, is the difference between a man standing with his back to the sun and the other with his face to the sunshine. A Christian is one who trusts, and love will be the sure result of the trust.

II. The way by which this consciousness comes to us is through the Holy Spirit. The measure of our faith is the measure of our possession of the Spirit of God. The means by which the Spirit of God works on us, is Christian truth. If we want a purer, brighter, gladder consciousness of God’s love, don’t work yourself up to it, but look and look and ever look to the great fact in which all that love is expressed.

III. This love of God shed abroad in our hearts is a sure foundation and the only foundation upon which we can build any substantial hope for the future. The love that died for me can never cease till it makes me perfect like itself. God’s love will never fail me till it puts me rejoicing into the heart of glory.

A. M.

CXLI. The Proof of God's Love. ROM. v. 8. "*But God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*"

IN broad and striking contrast with the comparative poverty of our human love, Paul sets the greatness and the wonder of God's love to man.

I. God does not ask us to take His love simply on *trust*.

To doubt His love would be an affront to the reason as well as a dishonour to the heart.

Our faith is not vain in the sense of being unsupported by proofs.

II. What is the proof?

1. Christ died for us.

The death of Christ was the manifestation of the infinite love of God to man, and was designed to prove it to the world. It was not necessary for Christ to die to make God love us, but Christ died to show that God already loved us.

2. *While we were yet sinners* He died for us.

If He had died for good men it would have been an amazing act of love; but it was more.

A profound sense of sin is always associated with a profound realization of the greatness of the love of God.

III. The cross of Christ is a present reality. The Apostle does not say God has proved His love towards, as if it were something away in the past; but he says it is a proof going on still. The cross speaks to the heart of man with the same tenderness and power as it did to the eye-witnesses of the love and sorrow of His passion and death.

G. S. B.

CXLII. The Old Letter and the New Spirit.

ROM. vii. 6. "*That we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.*"

WHAT is really gained by this change from the oldness of the letter to the newness of the spirit?

I. The area of the service is widened.

The law, because it is a letter, limits it within the circle of legislation; the spirit moves it to the utmost circumference of opportunity.

II. The newness of spirit changes the motive of the service.

It is now done from love, not fear.

III. The newness of the spirit increases the excellence of the service. The loftier the motive is the nobler the deed. What we hold ourselves to by an effort of will is never the most excellent work. Only when we put our hearts into our work is it of the best. W. M. T.

CXLIII. No Condemnation. ROM. viii. 1. *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."*

THE truth here declared follows from the position taken up by Paul in the preceding portion of his epistle.

I. There is no condemnatory sentence in execution against Christians now. Believers in Jesus Christ still sin, and their sins are noticed by God, and God is displeased with them; but He does not treat them as criminals, but as children. No sentence of condemnation is being executed outwardly and none is being executed inwardly. Being justified by faith we have peace with God.

II. There is no sentence of condemnation recorded for execution. The disciple of Christ is not reprov'd but pardoned, and his pardon is full and complete. In God's book there is no recognition whatever of the sins He has forgiven. He does not throw our sins on the surface of the sea to appear again like bread cast on the waters, but buries them in the depths.

III. The absence of all condemnation is accounted for by that which Christ is to the soul that relies upon Him. Christ is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Simple trust appropriates the sin-offering. He is the High Priest who ever liveth to make intercession for us, and faith in Jesus gives us a personal interest in that intercession. But how may I know whether I am trusting the true Christ, the Christ of God? The reality of our reliance in the Christ of God is proved by the character and style of our life. Jesus Christ leads all His disciples to walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. S. M.

CXLIV. The Misery and Deliverance of Creation. ROM. viii. 20-22. *"The creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."*

PAUL'S conception of the universe is expressed in one of the boldest and sublimest movements of imaginative thought to be found in any literature; but beneath the imaginative grandeur of the clothing the conception may be very easily recognised.

I. The creation, including the material universe, is subject to vanity, and suffers from evils not of its own choice but the Divine appointment. Five and twenty years ago it was the general tendency of preachers to maintain that the physical universe perfectly illustrates the Divine beneficence as well as the Divine wisdom and power. But now it is said there is nothing perfect; even the human eye has most curious faults. Then look how the birds and beasts die of famine and in conflict. Think also how flowers and plants and herbs and trees suffer from innumerable calamities. Still there is more happiness than pain, and in spite of all, the things that God has made reveal His eternal power and Godhead.

II. But this imperfection is not to continue for ever. The pains are birth throes, and all things are to pass into new and higher forms of existence, whatever these may be. Imagination cannot conceive it because it has no materials to work on.

Some think that through the operation of the law of development there will arise at last an intellectual aristocracy with absolute command of the resources of the world, and that these will have absolute control over the life and fortunes of the race. Others tell us that the great movement will be at last arrested. The play of the mighty forces which sustain it will cease. Then life in all its forms will be no more.

III. Paul therefore admits scientific facts, but repudiates theories based on them.

1. He agrees when the man of science says he discovers signs of imperfection ; waste of life ; appalling suffering. But he repudiates the inference that there is no intelligent Ruler.

2. If the man of science maintains development, and alleges that man on the side of his inferior life belongs to the inferior universe, Paul listens with an open mind. But he denies that this is a complete account of human nature. He maintains that the will is free.

3. He denies that the groaning and travailing are to end in despair and stagnation ; and exults in the certainty of the hope that the creature will be delivered.

4. He protests against the idea that the law of physical development is a law of morals. The very inspiration of Christian charity is to rescue the victims of this relentless law. Christianity says : " Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

R. W. D.

CXLV. All Things Working for Good. ROM. viii.

28. *" We know that all things work together for good to them that love God."*

THE incarnation of the Son of God is the highest expression of that love which presides, although not always visibly, in nature and in history. Here is the fact, here is the faith, which makes us certain that everything is ordered for the good of the servants of God. If " God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," it is not difficult to believe our text.

I. All things are working together for God's glory. " The Lord hath made all things for Himself," and voluntarily or reluctantly, consciously or unconsciously, all things work together for Him. He would not be God if it could be otherwise.

II. The good of them that love Him is the object of God's providence. This is not a presumptuous idea on the part of God's servants. God's greatness is not inconsistent with His lavishing the very treasures of His thought upon the least considerable things in Nature, and we believe that " Like as a father pitieth his children, so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear Him."

The Apostle does not mean by "good," material visible prosperity in this present life. Success in life is not linked to the love of God in the majority of cases. But it is real, absolute, eternal good—the good of the soul rather than of the body. The misfortunes and disappointments which await those who love God here are so far from falsifying the Apostle's statement, that they illustrate its truth. The love of God can transform all circumstances into blessings. The soul which loves the imperishable can never be doomed to a real disappointment. Earthly misfortunes do but intensify its hold upon the one great source of happiness. The very same set of circumstances may chisel out the finest lineaments in the saintly character, or the darkest traits of the desperate criminal. That which makes the mighty, the infinite difference, is the presence or the absence of the love of God in the soul.

H. P. L.

CXLVI. The Heart of God being Given, All is Given. ROM. viii. 32. *"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things."*

THERE are a great many very sad and troubled hearts in this world, and this is so because these hearts have lost sunshine about them.

Let your heart find heart, and sunbeams begin to play about you instantly; hope lights up your path, and joy like an angel is beside you, when you lie down and when you rise up. God knows what the heart is, and what the heart wants it shall have—love—for God is love. And Jesus says: "The Father loves you, as He loves Me."

I. This little word "He" in our text. That little word covers the immensity of God's nature. "In Him all fulness dwells."

II. "His own Son." That is just as wonderful. Immensity is full of the sons and daughters of the Lord God, and we among them. Why should there not be "the First-born"? "the brightness of His glory," the image of the invisible God, the First-born of every creature?

III. "Us all." We have come from God and He is in

us all. Every tree is in its seed. God is in His offspring. We are a sad case for God, with our manifold vices, follies, and passions. We are His cross; His Son is our ideal. Unto us all, into us all, He hath given His own Son. He has poured Him, like a river of life, love and light through the heart of the race.

IV. God being what He is in His affections towards us, will "freely give us all things." Not being able to withhold His own life, what can He withhold? "Things" are a great deal less than the heart, and if God has given us His heart, He cannot withhold His things.

J. Pu.

CXLVII. Victory. ROM. viii. 37. "*More than conquerors.*"

THE key-note of the text is Victory. It is the characteristic of all God's works, that whatever He does, He does abundantly. There is always something in excess; a David's cup that mantles over, or a Joseph's bough which runneth over the wall.

Every miracle was done overflowingly. The lame man not only walked but leapt. When the daughter of Jairus was raised to life, Jesus commands that "something be given her to eat;" and the very fragments of His feedings are "twelve baskets full." Christ came into this world "that we might have life, more abundantly." The life in union with Him is a truer and a greater life than unfallen life, than any angel's life could ever have been. "We are more than conquerors."

I. Consider how Christ was "more than conqueror."

1. In His death. A prayer for His enemies—a provision of filial tenderness for His mother—a free pardon to a sinner—the largess of a kingdom with a royal hand—these were the achievements of the dying man Christ Jesus. "More than conqueror."

2. In His rising. The victory would have been complete if that body had come forth the same, but He did more. The body was more beautiful, more spiritual than the body which was laid in the grave.

3. In His ascension and exaltation. He ascends but does not leave His followers to weep—for He is more with

them than before—He is exalted, and none are orphaned. “He is more than conqueror.”

II. The believer is “more than conqueror.”

In the contest with Satan God undertakes that His people shall not be overcome, and more, that they shall overcome and put the enemy in fear. “He will flee from you.”

Then a sin overcome necessarily becomes a virtue. Satan is foiled with his own weapons, and Israel enriched with the spoils of Egypt. That too much speaking will become eloquence for Christ, that temper will make zeal.

The Christian would not exchange the dark memories of sorrow and bereavement for the sunniest of the world’s hours ; there was so much of Christ in them, so much of a tranquil mind, so much of heaven, that he comes out of the sorrow “more than conqueror.” And so when we die, like a ship, at high tide, pressing full-sailed into port, “an entrance is ministered unto us abundantly” into the kingdom. The world conquers—the Church is “more than conqueror.”

J. V.

CXLVIII. All Day Long. ROM. x. 21. “*But to Israel He saith, All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.*”

ST. PAUL is quoting the prophet Isaiah, and Isaiah is speaking to Israel in the name of God. To stretch out the hands is to make appeal or entreaty with silent imploring earnestness ; and this appeal God made to His “disobedient and gainsaying people.”

“All day long.” It is a pregnant expression which may well enlarge its scope with the lapse of time, which opens one vista to the Jewish prophet, and another to the Christian apostle, and another to us of to-day. For St. Paul the expression means that new epoch which, when he writes, has already opened upon the world—the day or age of the Messiah.

One day there was unlike any other, which probably St. Paul had in his mind when quoting these words—the day of Calvary. From the first moment of our Lord’s mental

agony in the garden begins this supreme appeal to the heart and conscience of Israel and of the world, and it lasts until He bows His head in death on the cross. It is eloquent for all who have ears to hear. Israel at the foot of the cross is still what Israel has been throughout the ages ; and over this unhappy race the Divine Sufferer must cry, "All day long I have stretched forth My hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people." We too have each of us his place somewhere on Mount Calvary. Christ crucified belongs to no one age or place.

I. Jesus Christ, with His hands stretched out upon the cross, makes an appeal to the hearts of Christians on behalf of God's standard of holiness, and against the sin of man. And He makes this appeal by the force of His own example.

II. He makes an appeal to our sense of what He has done for us. He is there, because otherwise we are lost. When we review our lives seriously, that which must strike us most is the persevering, overshadowing, "ever-pleading," mercy of God. Through all the past years of life, as we look back, we see the perpetual stretching out over us of the hands of the Crucified.

III. The first lesson is, that Jesus stretching out hands of compassion on the cross is a model for all Christians who have positions of authority. Mere law, mere right, is all very well for a man of the world, but the children of the Crucified ought to have caught sight of a higher ideal—Love. The other lesson is, that Jesus will not always stretch out hands of mercy. Christ crucified has no redemptive relations with the dead.

H. P. L.

CXLIX. The Jews. ROM. xi. 15. *"For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?"*

I. THESE words express the hope entertained by Paul of the ultimate solution of what was in his eyes a strange and mysterious puzzle—the refusal of the Jews to enter the Church of Christ. While the Gospel was daily gaining fresh successes among the Gentiles, the Jews remained outside. The solution come to by the apostle was, with the

rejection of the Jews a time was needed for the good of the Church, for the progress of the Gospel, for the interests of truth. Would it have been possible to give the Church its catholic character if at the very beginning there had been established at its centre a mass of believers in the old traditions? Would it have been possible to bring in the Gentiles at all? The rejection of the Jews was necessary for our admission. But when the day of their redemption is come and gone, that day shall be like life from the dead. To have once more the deep joyousness, the extraordinary sense of God's nearness and power—these special gifts of the old Hebrew race once more prevailing in the Church of Christ; what would it be but life from the dead?

II. We have before us the wonderful fact that our Lord died for all mankind, and that His Gospel is still unknown to the great majority of the human race. Whenever we are disposed to be daunted by watching the slow progress of the Gospel, the answer is that such delays are to be looked on simply as parts of the process of God. That there is a purpose in delays and obstacles is one half of the principle that Paul asserts, and the other half is the gain that accompanies every success; and as the one is a consolation when we are discouraged, so is the other a perpetual encouragement when we are labouring.

F. T.

CL. The Living Sacrifice. ROM: xii. 1. *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."*

DOCTRINAL discussions with Paul lead to practical conclusions.

I. The duty which Paul lays down. He asks for a sacrifice—not an atonement, but a daily oblation of gratitude.

We are to make the transformation of our souls manifest through our bodies—our members the instruments of righteousness.

II. Let us notice what qualities the sacrifice should possess. It must be—

1. Living, not dead like the Jewish sacrifices.

2. Holy.

3. Acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ.

4. Reasonable—one which it befits the Christian as a rational being to render.

III. The motive by which the offering is enforced—"The mercies of God." He brings the entire motive power of the Cross to bear on us. W. M. T.

CLI. Living and Dying to the Lord. ROM. xiv. 8.

"For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die we are the Lord's."

THESE great words were suggested by a comparatively trivial thing—the scruples which Christian Jews brought into the Church. They were "weak," but the strong were in danger of insisting too much on their liberty, and thus grieving the weak. How does Paul decide?

I.—I. He refuses to each side the right to judge the other.

2. Next he asks the strong and the weak to give each other full credit for perfect conscientiousness and loyalty to Christ.

3. He reminds them of the one supreme principle that should govern the life of every servant of Christ—the consciousness that they did not belong to themselves, but to Jesus Christ.

II. This fact does not depend on our recognition of it. We may be unmindful of it, but none the less will He ask of us an account of our stewardship.

III. No reservation is made. Our business as well as our Sunday service belongs to Christ. Our amusements belong to Him as much as the rest of our life. Is it right to go to a theatre, ball, and so on? It is for Christ to decide these questions, and if we honestly ask Him, He will settle all such difficulties very quickly.

IV. The ground of this is, that Christ has bought us. We are bought with a price. Those who have seen men and women bought and sold in the slave-market would understand this with a readiness we cannot. The highest obligation and the highest honour of a Christian is that he is a slave of Jesus Christ. G. S. B.

CLII. Our Account. ROM. xiv. 12. *"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."*

WHEN St. Paul says that every man shall give account of himself to God, he makes one of the most solemn statements that are to be found even in his Epistles, and which must have at once lifted the thoughts of the apostle's Roman readers above their little controversies into a higher, serener atmosphere.

I. We have here a broad statement as to something which every human being has to do. Every one of us is accountable to God. Responsibility is one of those great words which, if they are dwelt on, shape the thoughts, the wills, the lives of men. It invests every life, whether near or remote, in high or low station, with an equal solemnity.

II. What man is responsible for, and the ground of that responsibility. Every man is to give an account of himself, of what he did or left undone, of the drift and current of his earthly life. And the ground why a man is thus responsible is, that the course of his existence is a matter of choice. We are what we have made ourselves. Our responsibility begins exactly when our power of choice begins. It would be easy for many of us to give an account, and more or less exhaustive, of others, but it is of ourselves that each must give account.

III. To whom is this account to be given? To God. Responsibility is the law of human society. Every man is responsible to some other man—but there is one Being to whom all must give an account, the eternal God. All the veils which hide us from each other—which hide us from ourselves—will drop away before the glance of His eye. If we could live in the daily remembrance of this truth, it would do three things for us—

1. It would be a check upon us.
2. It would prove a useful stimulus to our life.
3. It would be, like the old Jewish law, a schoolmaster to bring the soul to the feet of Jesus.

It makes us think over our lives, and what weakness, perverseness, and indifference we find in them! So we are driven to our Lord for pardon and for strength. We

can do all things through Christ that strengthens us ; and so with His cross before our eyes, with His presence and blessing in our souls, we look forward to our account with trembling joy. It had been impossible to stand before His throne unbefriended and alone ; but He in His generous love has delivered us, if we will, from our strongest enemy, and has already covered us with His robe of righteousness.

H. P. L.

CLIII. The Old Testament. ROM. xv. 4. *"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."*

THE things written in the bygone ages of Israel were written for the learning of Christians, that they through the perseverance and comfort which Scripture teaches might have hope in what is still an anxious future.

I. Consider what St. Paul's readers would understand by these words. The Roman Christians would not have understood, by the word Scriptures, the whole Christian Bible of our day, but only the Old Testament. With one exception, this word "Scriptures" is used in this restricted sense throughout the New Testament. St. Paul told the Romans that if they would, they might get patience, consolation, and hope out of the records of ancient Israel ; for what God had been to Israel of old, that He was still, and ever would be. St. Paul's words means much more than this to us. The twenty-seven books of the New Testament are now included in the word "Scriptures," and all these Scriptures, new and old, are written for our learning. Our business is to make the most of the lesson.

II. The true purpose of Holy Scripture. It is a manual of moral or spiritual learning. It is, if you will, a book for the understanding ; but much more, it is a book for the spirit and for the heart. Many other kinds of learning are found in the Bible. It is a manual of Eastern antiquities, a handbook of political experiences, a collection of moral wisdom as applied to personal conduct, a mine of poetry, a choice field for the study of languages ; but this is not

the learning which St. Paul says the Scriptures are meant to teach Christians. "That we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." That is the end of the highest learning which Scripture has to give us. Scripture teaches over and above something which does generate patience, comfort, hope; it reveals God in His attributes of righteousness and mercy, and in His astonishing intervention on the scene of human history in the person of His incarnate Son.

The Bible is the book of God, and therefore it is the book of the future, the book of hope. It pierces the veil between this and another life, pointing us on to the realms of light. The encouragement of hope is what St. Paul here insists on, and we need hope. In sorrow, in sin, and in death we may, if we will, find in Holy Scripture patience, consolation and hope.

H. P. L.

LIV. Paul's Salutation. ROM. xvi. 1. "*I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea.*"

By means of the light supplied by this paragraph, let us take a few glances at the life and work of the early church.

I. Let us take a momentary look at Paul himself. See how, with all the care of the Churches, he forgets no act of kindness. "Salute Rufus chosen of the Lord." Rufus is supposed to be the son of Simon, whom the multitude compelled to carry the cross of our Redeemer.

II. Notice that the name of Peter is not found in the text. If the advocates of Popery were correct in their assumptions, it must certainly have been there.

III. Learn how members were transferred from one church to another. They were received as becometh saints.

IV. Observe who are the class on whom the apostle bestows special commendation: Christian workers and Christian sufferers.

V. Notice the important place which women held in the early Church.

A. T.

CLV. Man's Judgment. 1 COR. iv. 3. *"With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment."*

ST. PAUL was far from being indifferent as to men's thoughts about his apostolical credentials, since the question of their genuineness was a matter of high public interest affecting the spiritual condition of all those to whom he ministered. As to what men thought of his personal character he professes entire indifference.

I. The judgment of our fellow-creatures upon our acts and characters is inevitable. How is a Christian to bear himself with reference to these judgments? Here St. Paul speaks: "It is a very small thing that I should be judged of you." He knew that human opinion has a work to do in God's government of the world.

1. It acts as a policeman in the world of thought and conduct, keeping outward order.

2. Public opinion does not err when it pronounces upon the personal acts of an individual. David's sin would be no less condemned by man's natural conscience than it is in David's own language of inspired penitence.

3. Public opinion ventures to pronounce judgment upon character. Man's judgment of character can be only certain in rare cases, and seldom or never during the judge's person's lifetime.

II. The uncertainty of man's judgment, and its liability to be reversed by a higher judgment hereafter.

This is what St. Paul felt, and considered the Corinthian judgment a very small thing—

1. Because they had not known him long.
2. Because their estimate was strangely biassed.
3. Because they had no real means of investigating the point in question, which was one belonging to the inner region of motive.

4. The knowledge of a higher judgment relieved him from all anxiety about the Corinthian opinion.

III. Two kinds of people may use this language: a very bad man, who has steeled himself against all that is good in public opinion, and burnt out the sensitive nerve of his conscience; and a saint, like Paul, may use the

language, for he is hidden privily in God's own presence from the strife of tongues. "Thou shalt answer for me, O Lord, my God." Most of us are between the two. We cannot sincerely profess wholly to say with St. Paul, "It is a very small thing what people say of me." We care a great deal what they say. But the language of every Christian, who lives in the thought of the day of judgment, and is preparing, through Christ's grace and mercy, to meet it, becomes increasingly more like this of St. Paul. In the world of moral estimates, as in the natural heavens, the stars vanish from sight at the sun's rising. The pardon and approving verdict of the eternal Judge is the one thing worth living for, and that verdict is best secured if we turn a deaf ear to the voices of men, and unite ourselves to Him who, in life and in death, is our wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

H. P. L.

LVI. Christ our Passover. 1 COR. v. 7. "*Even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.*"

THE allusion in the text may have been suggested to the Apostle either by the time of year, or by seeing some of his countrymen leaving Ephesus, where he then was, to go to Jerusalem to "eat the Passover" there. The most superficial reader of the Bible must be struck by the resemblance of the Passover in Egypt to the sufferings of Christ. It was the Old Testament shadow of the cross, a prophetic prophecy of the future, as well as an historical memorial of the past.

Note some of the points of analogy between the Jewish Passover and the sacrifice of Christ.

I. Both profess to deliver from death.

In each case the way of escape from it was of God's appointment.

The same peril of death hung over Israel as Egypt, and if it had not been for the intervention of God, they must have perished.

The Passover was not discovered or planned by them as a means to secure safety.

The peril of death as "the wages of sin" hangs over every sinner, and we have not invented the Gospel of Jesus Christ as our scheme of saving our souls.

Both ways are God-revealed, and neither can be altered or improved upon.

The slaying of an innocent lamb, as the way of escape in the Passover, points to the "holy, harmless, undefiled One 'slain for us.'"

II. After the paschal lamb had been slain, it was to be eaten by those saved from death. And our Lord declares in words most solemn and profound, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you."

Christ for us, and Christ in us, saving us from wrath, and also making us partakers of the eternal life that dwelt in Him.

III. The Passover appealed to faith, as the Cross Christ does.

The Jew did not understand how the rite was to avail him death from his home; but by refusing to avail himself of the passover lamb, he would have shown that he wanted the heart of all true religion, trust upon God rather than in himself.

A living trust, which surrenders the whole man to Christ to be saved and controlled, is the faith required of the sinner.

CLVII. The Old Leaven. I COR. v. 7, 8. *"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."*

THERE are few things that so press upon the mind and heart as the presence of evil among us. It is not merely the presence of misery, nor merely the presence of the visible sin which is so much the cause of it; but it is the wound to our moral nature that bleeds inwardly, which is an affront against the majesty and mercy of God. Those who groan under this burden, hear, not without a gleam of hope, this exhortation of the apostle.

I. The deep meaning of the phrase, leaven of sin. Leaven exercises one of the subtlest and strangest powers

of nature. So sin acts in single souls and in great societies. It is not enough to take away the consequences; we must purge out the leaven.

II. How is the leaven to be purged out? Paul did not appeal to the sense of shame or expediency, or any lower motive. He used the highest and most sacred motive: "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." Nothing but the truth and grace of God, as revealed in Christ, can take away sin.

The news of Christ our Passover was—

1. A message for the past. Wrath shall never touch those for whom His blood was shed, unless they trample it under foot, and count it as a common thing.

2. A message for the future. It would have been a small boon for the Israelites to be delivered from the land of Egypt had they been left in the land of Egypt still. So Christ saves us not only from the consequences of sin, but from sin itself. He hallows our human nature, and renews it in the image of God, to dedicate it once more to the Father which is in heaven.

A. B.

CLVIII. Bought with a Price. 1 COR. vi. 19, 20.

"Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

How strangely sounds this sentence in the ears of human pride! With what infinite wonder does it fill the natural man!

I. We notice first the great fact asserted in the text, that we are purchased, and the position into which we are brought because of that purchase. We are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and therefore we are not our own.

II. What is the course of conduct which a consideration of such position is calculated to induce us to pursue?

1. Let your devotedness to God be entire; glorify God in your bodies, in your intellect, in all your powers.

2. Let your devotedness be benevolent. Spend yourselves in energetic endeavours for the conversion of your fellows, and for the spread of the Gospel among you. There is an influence for good as well as an influence for evil.

3. Let your devotedness to God be consummated now—now, when the conflict between sense and faith, between the ceremonial and the spiritual, between the idolatrous and the ever-living, has commenced, and a thousand voices of the universe are pealing out the challenge: “Who is on the Lord’s side?”

W. M. P.

CLIX. Knowledge and Love. 1 COR. viii. 1.
“Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.”

I. THE error of the party of knowledge in the Corinthian Church was not in giving its full value to knowledge, or in bringing it to bear on practical life and daily conduct, but it lay in bringing knowledge alone to bear on these things. It lay in supposing that knowledge was the one only and sufficing guide of the conduct of human life. The apostle told them that if this knowledge was to guide them aright, it must be sanctified knowledge, it must be knowledge instructed and enlightened by the Divine grace of love.

II. Wherein and why is it that knowledge alone is imperfect in teaching us how to govern ourselves, whether as regards our own life or as regards that of others? The apostle tells us it is because it puffeth up; that is to say, tends to generate pride, and, if so, generates and fosters those two faults which most unfit us to judge of the affairs of life. One is selfishness, and the other short-sighted ignorance. Pride is never without a mixture of cruelty. You see it most clearly in the pride of race; but it is to be seen in all kinds of pride. Not only is pride selfish and unjust; it is short-sightedly ignorant. That which we despise we cannot understand, and when we despise, in the pride of our knowledge, any thing or any person, be sure of this, that we are profoundly ignorant of that language or that person.

III. Love edifies; that is, it builds up perfectly the whole man—secures an entire and harmonious and proportionate development of his nature. It does so by casting out that selfishness in man which always leads to a diseased and one-sided growth of his nature.

W. C. M.

CLX. The Battle of Life. I COR. ix. 7. "*Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges ?*"

I. WE have here an inspiring metaphor.

It is wise to begin the battle of life early.

If we are ever to be conquerors at last, we must fight with the world, the flesh, and the devil.

But if we thus fight we may hope to conquer, for others have done so before us.

But let us remember that some have been defeated.

II. There will be charges in this life battle. It is not to be won without pain and cost. Let us glance at some of these charges.]

If any man get to heaven, what a demand for courage he will have to meet.

If a man get to heaven, what a charge of patience he will be at.

If any man will get to heaven, what an amount of perseverance he will require to hold on and to hold out. What watchfulness, strength, wisdom are all needed.

III. Let us look at our text as a gracious reminder. Does any man at any time go a warfare on his own charge? I trow not.

You may reckon upon God's watchful providence. You shall have the Lord Jesus Christ to help you. A soldier of the Cross shall have the Divine power of God—the blessed Spirit.

Let me urge upon those beginning the battle of life two or three cautions and counsels.

Behold the wisdom of faith.

Be thoroughly alive to the importance of prayer.

Consider, too, the necessity of holiness.

C. H. S.

CLXI. The Doubt of St. Paul. 1 COR. ix. 27.

"But I keep under the body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means when I have preached to others I myself should be a castaway."

OBSERVE that it was towards the close of his Christian career that St. Paul penned these words. It was not while the genuineness of his conversion had still to be put to the test, or the power of his ministry had not been fully demonstrated. These are the words of a man who for twenty years has been a consistent, self-denying believer, a man upon whose ministry God has set His seal in the plainest manner, and yet this man speaks like one in doubt, yea as one who might still lose the crown. St. Paul did not venture to count himself safe. He felt that there was the same necessity as ever for keeping up the warfare with the flesh.

I. Consider the apostle as an aged man. We observe then that there is no period of his earthly life during which the spiritual warrior may safely relax from his toil. It will probably not be in the same form that the flesh wars against the Spirit in age and in youth. One ruling desire succeeds another, as though life were made up of seasons and each season had its appropriate dominant passion. It should make us more than suspicious of our spiritual condition if we feel that enough has been done, the flesh sufficiently subjugated, and the world sufficiently overcome. It is only the man who is wrestling with the last enemy Death, whom we may venture to congratulate as having done with strife.

II. Consider the apostle as an aged Christian. In proportion to long acquaintance with the Gospel is the danger of resting in cold and barren orthodoxy. The great apostle evidently thought that heaven might be lost so long as it was not actually entered. Our text does not exactly state doubt as to salvation, but affirms that there could not be salvation were there to come a truce with the world and the flesh. He alone has a right to hope whose whole effort is to strive.

III. Consider the apostle as an aged minister. He contemplates the possibility of failing to share in the blessing which he had been instrumental in conveying to others.

It is not through what the man speaks, but through what is handled and applied by God's Spirit, that souls are converted. The preacher may after all be a castaway. Let us all take heed that we be not high minded, but fear.

H. M.

CLXII. The Spiritual Rock. 1 COR. x. 4. "*And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.*"

THERE is an allusion in these words to a tradition among the Jews, not mentioned in the Old Testament, that a well formed out of the spring at Horeb, gathered itself up into a rock, and followed the people for forty years, sometimes rolling of itself, sometimes carried by Miriam. The use of an illustration does not commit a man to its actual truth, and there is no reason, but the reverse, to believe that Paul credited it.

I. The Lord Jesus was as truly present in the Jewish as He is in the Christian Church. The Angel of the Covenant occupied as important a place relatively in the Old Testament as the Lord Jesus in the New; and Jewish as well as Christian theologians have acknowledged him to be the Messiah (Exod. iii. 2; Acts vii. 38; Exod. xxiii. 20; Josh. v. 13; Isa. lxiii. 8, 9).

Here are incarnations of Christ. As we read of Him thus following His ancient people in their long pilgrimages, satisfying their spiritual needs with Himself the living water, we are not only touched to think of the strange and wonderful interest He has ever taken in man, but we read with new thankfulness and delight His words: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink."

II. There is a warning in these words. The Jews all drank of the same spiritual drink, and yet with the greater part of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. The higher spiritual privileges are no infallible security against apostacy. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

G. S. B.

CLXIII. The Use of the Scriptures. I COR. X. II.

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

THE text more accurately translated reads thus: "Now all these things happened unto them for a typical purpose, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages (or 'dispensation') have reached." The apostle regards the incarnation, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus as bringing us to the "last ages" in the history of the human race. He is thinking, not so much of the end of the material world, as of the close of a long series of God's dealings with mankind, the final revelation of God in Jesus Christ to the race, which thereby enters on its last and most critical "dispensation or age."

He sees in the Jewish history, in their spiritual blessings and privileges, temptations and falls, not only "ensamples," but "types" of the vaster spiritual facts of the last dispensation under which we live. The Old Testament prefigures the New, as the first outlines of the artist's study prefigure the finished perfect painting.

I. This truth will add to the intellectual interest of the Old Testament.

Christians, instead of regarding the history of the Jews as dry and of no concern to them, would, grasping this truth, that "all these things happened with a typical purpose," with new interest and delight trace the outlines of the Gospel appearing in the imperfect shadows of the law.

II. This principle would guard against the error of treating the Old Testament as God's final revelation of Himself.

One class of Christians find more spiritual profit in ingeniously spiritualising the dresses of the priests or vessels of the sanctuary, than in the Sermon on the Mount or the Epistle of St. James. A type can never be as full of meaning as that which it typifies; we must turn not to Exodus or Leviticus, but to the Gospels and Epistles, for the "substance of the things" shadowed forth in the Old Testament.

III. This will suggest to us the "admonition" we may

gain from a devout intelligent study of the history of the Jews.

Seeing how they, who chosen by God to be a peculiar people to Himself, and entrusted with special revelations, yet fell and were finally rejected, let us be warned that we fall not "after the same example of unbelief."

G. S. B.

CLXIV. Temptation. I COR. X. 13. *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man : but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."*

THE apostle has just been warning against too much self-confidence ; he now speaks against the opposite faults, too much downheartedness and despondency.

I. There is a precise correspondence between strength and trial. The temptation is proportioned to the power of resistance. Do not think that there is something hard and heavy and worse than all the past to come: the burden is made for the back.

II. The very same Divine act makes both the trial and the way to get out of it. God tempts us only in the way of testing us, and He points a way of escape. We are never brought into a blind alley, it is a thoroughfare, and we can get out if we please ; with the Egyptians on this side, and the sea on that, God will clear the waters of the deep to make a way.

III. This must be so unless God make Himself a liar. I wish to put it strongly. If it were not so, men would have a right to turn upon God and to say, "Thou hast deceived me."

God does not force His help upon us ; but nothing will come to us that we shall not be able to baffle and beat, so long as we have His strength for ours.

A. M.

CLXV. Religion and Life. 1 COR. X. 31. "*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*"

EVERYTHING that we do should (1) Show the intention of God in our existence; (2) Be done in obedience to God; (3) Be so done that when completed it shall be to the praise of God's wisdom, power, and love.

The principle of my text is—Religion shall mingle with and guide all the affairs of life, and cannot be safely dispensed with in any department of our existence. Take five great words that cover our civilization and apply this.

I. *Business.* It is busy-ness—going about here and there. It is the sore travail God hath given to the sons of men under the sun. We are all Issachars; the burden of two worlds is upon us. Now integrity is necessary to a healthful business; strength and health and peace of mind are necessary, and these come from religion. Business is a dull leaden cloud in itself, and needs the light of God.

II. *Government.* In the home—in society—reverence and religion are needed. The development of the family cannot be beautiful without it. These great modern cities, and this great British empire, embracing the globe, will become a helpless ruin without God.

III. *Literature.* Books, beautiful books, the companions of all my years! Literature! the source of thee is in God. Literature must be (1) truthful; (2) pure; (3) generous, loving, kind.

IV. *Science.* The natural world is a book which God wrote and is writing continually. If men of science would understand more perfectly the higher hieroglyphics of the world of nature, they must pray to God.

V. *Philosophy.* The attempt to account for the whence, how, and why of things.

Whence—God created them.

How—Even religion does not tell us.

Why—That ultimately the universe might be filled with blessedness and the glory of God.

T. J.

CLXVI. The Grounds of our Faith. 1 COR. ii. 16.

"We have the mind of Christ."

THESE words, if believed, bring us to the very feet of the Lord Jesus. The anchorage of our belief is here, and the treasure which we hold in trust for the world is here—"We have the mind of Christ."

I. These words bring before us the ground of our religion's certainty as Christians. Christianity bases its claim to our allegiance, upon its power to give us truth. Its old and splendid promise is, "By the lips of the Lord Himself ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." A thousand voices are ready to echo the mocking question of Pilate, "What is truth?" Scientific searchers say, "We know." That terrible serpent, the three-headed Cerberus of unbelief, throws its shadow across the path, as the anxious, hopeful, or perhaps weary and burdened soul seeks to press forward to the feet of Jesus.

There is also another shadow across the path to Jesus; that which is cast by those who would put, instead of the mind of Christ, the mind of the Church, and would lead us, instead of straight to the Cross, round a museum of antiquities to find Christ.

II. The nature and measure of our religious responsibility—"We have the mind of Christ." What then? Wealth and responsibility, power and duty, privilege and obligation, always measure one another. Truth is a trust. He who has discovered any portion of useful truth has something in trust for mankind. He has no right to cover his lamp with a bushel. Christianity is essentially and pre-eminently a message—a practical offer of salvation committed to the Church to proclaim to all mankind. It is a message of comfort, glad news, a message of hope to nations as well as to individuals. The voice of Jesus comes to each Christian—"Son, daughter, go work to-day in My vineyard." "The night cometh when no man can work."

E. R. C.

CLXVII. Spiritual Gifts. 1 COR. xii. 1. "*Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.*"

THE original is "spiritual things," and it is the want of appreciation of spiritual things that makes men unwilling to receive spiritual gifts. Not only in heathen lands but in others there is this ignorance of spiritual things. Worldly men, whatever they call themselves, have no understanding, or feeling, or appreciation of these things. Even those who profess to be the guides of the age, and to unfold the latest discoveries in philosophy, deny that there are any spiritual influences at work among us. Hence the need of thinking on the great teaching of the Gospel. Even the Gospel may be set forth in such a way as to ignore its spiritual characteristics. Apollos knew only the baptism of John, and had to be instructed that he might know the way of God more perfectly.

In many ages of the Church there has been a similar state of things. It is not above sixty years since, in the general teaching of the Gospel in this country, there was almost no allusion to the influence and working of the Holy Spirit of God.

Even when proclaiming these great truths we may proclaim them amiss, and consider that the Holy Spirit is too much tied to ordinances.

I. No man can even profess Christianity without the help of the Holy Spirit. The strongest arguments might not convince a man unless the Holy Spirit of God was at hand to give force to the argument.

II. There are diversities of gifts, but the same source. Every man, in the place which he finds assigned to him by God, has a ministration, especially the ordained ministers of the Church, and without that Spirit how could we engage in the work—sinful vessels of no value.

III. If we are to have any real conviction of this spiritual operation among the people of God for the conversion of souls, our thoughts must be occupied with things unseen and eternal. We must think not only of spiritual gifts, but of the spiritual world.

A. C. T.

CLXVIII. The Manifestation of the Spirit.

1 COR. xii. 7. "*But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.*"

I. IN the gift of the Divine Spirit we have the selected, the very best gift of God the Father. There can be nothing higher than that; God Himself going down to the root and spring of the human being.

II. This promise of God is a promise actually fulfilled to every believer. Unless we get fast hold of these supernatural truths, the Gospel is nothing to us. What dignity, what sacredness, is thus conferred on what we call religious experience when it is good and true.

III. Let no one suppose that this manifestation of the Spirit is going to melt all Christian people into one common model, and make one unvarying type and form of their experience. The vessels are differently shaped, but they are brought to the pure, clear, mountain spring.

IV. The test of this manifestation of the Spirit is the test of utility—"To profit withal"—utility as applied to ourselves and as applied to others.

A R

CLXIX. The Body of Christ. 1 COR. xii. 12. "*For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.*"

THE restlessness of heathen Corinth communicated itself to Christian Corinth. Even the Eucharist became the scene of strife, and they fought for the gifts of the Spirit.

How was Paul to correct this evil? He could not say, "Before all things no zeal." He might have threatened, but he rarely appealed to the fears of men. He set before them the ideal of the Church. Their conduct, he tells them, is as unreasonable as if the eye were quarrelling with the ear, and the foot with the hand. They were limbs of the body, which was nothing less than Christ Himself.

Thus when you make parties amongst yourselves, what is this but to divide Christ, to dismember Him to His infinite anguish? You are the body, you His limbs, all of

you. There is in the Church of Christ a force of gravitation, and each small atom is acted upon and acts upon every other small atom. It is a serious reflection that even our secret thoughts influence those around us. Your self-will, your carelessness, your vice, propagates itself by a thousand channels, and will subtly steal like a throbbing poison until the whole body is at the point of death.

J. B. L.

CLXX. Primary Truths. I COR. xv. 3, 4 *"I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."*

I. THESE are the primary truths which Paul delivered to the Corinthians. The story of the cross and the resurrection was what he proclaimed everywhere. You never go far in his life or Epistles without meeting them.

1. These were the leading principles of the religion that turned the world upside down. The effects Christianity produced upon the world are amongst the greatest difficulties of infidelity. And what did it all? Not a mere publication of a higher code of duty, but the simple story of the cross of Calvary and the empty sepulchre in the garden.

2. Learn what the foundation of our own personal religion must be if we really want inward spiritual comfort. The early Christians plainly possessed such comfort. The proof of it was their grasp of these facts.

II. Why did Paul give these truths such prominence? Not merely because he was commanded to do so, but because men's wants could not be met and satisfied by any other gospel.

1. We have all a sense of sin. Nothing cures this but the sight of the Divine Mediator between God and man.

2. We are universally liable to sorrow. None of God's creatures is so vulnerable as man. The cold lessons of stoicism have no power to help us. We need a living personal Friend, and it is here that the doctrine of the resurrection helps us.

3. We must certainly face death. At no point do

false religions and philosophy break down so completely as at this point. Where they are weakest the Gospel is strongest. It is this, and this only, that will enable us to meet the last enemy without fear, and say: O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?

J. C. R.

CLXXI. Christ the Firstfruits. 1 COR. xv. 20. "*But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.*"

THESE words are the conclusion of an argument, not a mere assertion. The argument is divided into two parts.

I. The enormous amount of testimony there is to the facts

2. The moral proofs. If Christ be not risen—

(a) Our preaching is vain, and your faith is vain.

(b) The preachers are liars.

(c) Those who have fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

(d) We are of all men most miserable, because we have been deceived, and the truth belongs to the worldly, the unbelieving and the sensual—which would subvert the moral foundations of the universe.

I. The historical truth of the resurrection of Christ.

No one has ever denied that this Epistle was written by Paul no more than twenty-five years after the death of Christ. This is undeniable proof that the resurrection was believed in by the apostles, was the substance of their teaching, and was the foundation on which the earliest Christian Churches were built. There is no fact in the history of the world for which there is such an accumulation and variety of evidence as for the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead.

II. Not only an historical fact, but by it Christ became the firstfruits of them that slept. The Jews on the second day of the Paschal feast presented before the Lord in the Temple the first sheaf cut from the barley then ripe in their fields. It was an acknowledgment that the whole harvest belonged to God. Now Jesus rose from the dead the day after these firstfruits were dedicated, and the

thought seems to be—this resurrection of Jesus declares that all the dead belong to God.

To deny the resurrection of Christ is to take away the foundation of our hope in immortality.

G. S. B.

CLXXII. The Natural and the Spiritual. I COR. xv. 46. *"That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual."*

THE method of God's working is upward progress. The imperfect precedes the perfect. Such is God's method in the natural world and also in the spiritual.

I. Have regard to the dispensations of revealed religion—first the law, then love.

II. This upward progress is seen in Christian experience and in the development of Christian character.

III. This upward progress is seen in the increase of the spiritual kingdom in the world.

Can Divine progress be continued? Can Christianity live? Yes; for—

1. It has lived and increased in spite of the most determined opposition. The heavens are not going to fall, good things are not going to die.

2. We have the old promise of the Holy Ghost. The progress is not rapid. But let the Church of God calm her heart. Above all things, let us not be afraid.

T. J.

CLXXIII. Christian Strength. I COR. xvi. 13. *"Be strong."*

THIS whole verse has in it the ring of the battle-field. These words of Paul are in themselves "half-battles," and send the Christian soldier forward with new eagerness into the thickest of the fight. This command presupposes life. There is no might in the dead. The new birth lies at the foundation of all true strength of moral character. These words also presuppose that spiritual strength is in a very important sense under our own control. The

Divine strength comes in connection with the use of means by ourselves.

I. To fulfil this injunction there must be an unwavering conviction of the truth of Bible doctrines. Faith is at the root of all earnestness or strength of character. If a man believes anything thoroughly, whether it be truth or error, he will become active and earnest. For the purpose cultivate familiarity with the whole Scriptures. A merely emotional piety may do well enough to beguile a leisure hour, but if you want to build up a spiritual manhood, you need principles, doctrines, and without the diligent study of the word of God you cannot get these.

II. We must have a devotional spirit.

The intellect must not be stimulated to the neglect of the heart. Amid the multifarious things which press themselves upon our attention, we are apt to neglect those habits of devotional retirement so important to the growth of piety.

III. We must regularly use the strength we have.

There can be no vigour of soul without faith and prayer, but that vigour will have no growth if we do not constantly exert it in the life-battle with sin in us and around us. Exercise is essential to health. They become the strongest who, in contending with the evil that is opposed to them in the world, put forth all their strength.

W. M. T.

CLXXIV. The Limitation of Knowledge. 1 COR.

xvii. 9. *"Now we know in part."*

ST. PAUL is placing knowledge in contrast with love. He implies that knowledge belongs to the present in its essence; love only in its form. But love abideth for ever, and knowledge is the minister of love.

I. Our knowledge is limited, (1) in range, (2) in form, (3) by circumstances. But Paul teaches us to see that these mysteries are an important factor in our lives. He rounds off life on this side and that, not with a sleep, but with the glory of the invisible.

II. The fullest recognition of the limitations of knowledge is not only helpful but essential for the fulfilment of our

several tasks. We are tempted to make our own knowledge, our own thoughts, our own experience, an absolute standard. On the other hand, we are tempted to apply a dominant method to subjects that do not admit it. It requires a serious effort to acknowledge that others have the power of seeing what we cannot see, and watchful self-denial to admit that a method rich in splendid results and great promise has no place in the highest subjects of human interest.

III. These words describe the powers by which our efforts are made effective. We advance towards the limits of an attainable knowledge by every fragmentary movement. We look upon the fullest vision of the truth in the combination of parts held separately. This is the Divine law of spiritual progress and spiritual apprehension. The manifold endowments of the nations are made contributory to the evolving of the everlasting Gospel.

IV. This paradox is the very joy of life. We know all, and we have still much to learn. Our strength is to feel that the end given to us is not yet gained. It is no disrespect to our fathers if we allow that their words were not final; it is no flattery to our sons if we bid them make good new conquests.

Perfect knowledge would be the sentence of spiritual death: "The whole can increase no more, is dwarfed, and dies." But let us thank God we know in part; and we know Him that is true. That is the double thought able to move us and to calm us; to move us by the call of indisputable sovereignty, to calm us by the presence of unfailing love.

B. F. W.

CLXXV. Helpers of your Joy. 2 COR. I. 24. "*Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy.*"

THIS Epistle much taken up with the subject of his own ministry. Paul's ministry, from our knowing so much about it, has become practically the dominant and ideal type of the Christian ministry.

I. The negation, what is disclaimed. He repudiates and disclaims supreme religious authority over them and their faith.

It is true he was divinely commissioned to reveal by speech and pen Divine truth, to preach the Gospel, to legislate for the Church, to guide and rule the lives of men. But he saw round each individual a sphere of responsibility, whole and entire, which no other might assail.

Strange that men should boldly arrogate to themselves what the inspired apostle distinctly disclaims—infallibility in everything on which they choose to speak.

II. The position that he claims. Helpers of your joy. In these days there is hindrance along the whole line of movement.

1. Intellectual hindrances. Facts and doctrines are questioned. Maintaining these we are helpers of each other.

2. Hindrances rising from the pressure of life. People are more on the move, less at rest, less at home, more liable to change than formerly.

God's day of rest was never more needed ; and welcome both to preacher and people should be the hour that brings them into the great Presence.

3. Hindrances arising from the continual shortcoming of the Christian life. Discouragement has a darker sister named Despair, who glides gently up behind her. We are to bear and overmatch all by the glad tidings of Divine, unwearying, invincible love.

4. Hindrances rising from trouble and sorrow.
We only can tell of immortal joy.

5. Dark inevitable death waits for each.

We can come to the very brink of the river, with such as are going away, and can tell them such things as when believed will rob death of its terrors.

A. R.

CLXXVI. The Devices of Satan. 2 COR. ii. 11. "*For we are not ignorant of his devices.*"

It is both unphilosophical and dangerous to deny the existence and agency of evil spirits, or to consider such topics to be too absurd for discussion.

Their non-existence cannot be proved, and the foundation of our faith on this matter is the testimony of Scrip-

ture. There are many things in our experience which tend to corroborate and confirm the testimony.

There are two mistakes into which we are liable to fall regarding the prince of evil. On the one hand, we are apt to over-estimate his influence, and think of him as if he were another God. On the other hand, there is the danger of imagining that because Satan is unseen we may give ourselves no concern about him. Among the things which render Satan a formidable enemy is the experience he has acquired in dealing with human souls throughout the history of the race. But we, on our side, may become familiar with his ordinary tactics to ensnare men.

I. His employment of deceitful promises. "He is a liar, and the father of it." He deceives by exaggerating the advantages that are to flow from yielding to his enticements, and by concealing the dangers that are incurred.

II. He silvers over evil things with specious names. A lie is softened into a mistake, an indulgence in intemperance is a frolic, a wasting of the early years of life in folly and wickedness is a "sowing of one's wild oats." Infidelity has been re-baptized as freedom of thought. Poison, however you label it, is poison still, but the danger is all the greater if it is called a harmless drug.

III. He caricatures sacred things, and holds them up to ridicule. He represents the Christian life as one of asceticism and sourness, and talks of "vinegar-faced Christians."

IV. He soothes the soul to sleep by the repetition of current sayings, the fallacy of which is not detected. For the beguiling of men, the adversary keeps certain aphorisms in constant circulation. Such as "God is merciful." "A man's belief matters not if he be sincere."

The one great security against his assaults is to be found in prayer. Satan can never withstand an open Bible and an earnest prayer to God.

W. M. T.

CLXXVII. Our Sufficiency. 2 COR. iii. 5. "*Our sufficiency is of God.*"

THE doctrine in these words is no more true of ministers than of Christians in general. The station is different, but the strength is the same.

I. This sufficiency of God may be considered either as proper or communicated. By God's proper sufficiency we mean that He is self-existent and independently happy.

1. He is sufficient for the preservation of the universe which His hands have made.

2. He is sufficient for the preservation and the perpetuity of the gospel plan in the salvation and ultimate happiness of every individual believer. Christianity is a course of Divine operations meeting with formidable opposition, but completed at last.

II. Let us look at the authority which believers have to accept this sufficiency for themselves.

We have a right to expect it, because it is promised to us in the Bible. We expect it, because we see that it was given to the saints of old time. We expect it, because we see it given to the saints now. What trial is there that we cannot bear, what work is there that we cannot accomplish, if we take hold of the sufficiency of God. W. M. P.

CLXXVIII. Mirrors of Christ. 2 COR. iii. 18. "*But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*"

THE idea which Paul here announces is, that they who are much in Christ's presence become mirrors of Him, reflecting more and more permanently His image, until they themselves perfectly resemble Him. This assertion rests upon a well known law of our nature. Our duty, then, if we would be transformed into the image of Christ, is plain.

I. We must associate with Him; we must make Him our most constant companion. We must not reflect Him in an occasional intermittent way, but steadily and continually. We must live with Him.

II. We must be careful to turn fully round to Christ, so as to give a full and fair reflection of Him. We must not turn only half round, so as still to let other images fall on us.

III. We must stand in His presence with open unveiled face. We may wear a veil in the world, refusing to reflect

it, but when we return to the Lord we must uncover our face. A covered mirror reflects nothing. Perfect beauty may stand before it, but the napkin shows no sign, offers no response.

It reduces itself to this. Be much in the presence of Christ, be so honestly enamoured of Him that you will find Him everywhere, and that your thoughts will fall back to Him as often as the engagements of life permit.

Here is something we can do for Christ: we can reflect Him. And by reflecting Him we shall certainly extend the knowledge of Him. Many who do not look at Him look at you.

M. D.

CLXXIX. The Ministry. 2 COR. iv. 1, 2. *"Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."*

I. THE ministry is a business with the world. It is a divinely appointed agency for the communication of God's will to man. It is this which exalts it far above human resource and human authority. So long as men are born and die and sin, so long will the ministry have a business with the world.

II. This business of the ministry is mainly with the consciences of men. Every man has a conscience, and it is a comfort broad and strong that there is something in all of you marking the faithful appeal, pointing the solemn warning.

III. The great instrumentality which the ministry is empowered to use is the truth. That truth is the Gospel. In Paganism the higher rose the culture the deeper sank the character; and the whole world seemed like one vast valley fertile and gay with flowers, but no motion in the dim dead air till the breath came down from heaven.

Our great business is to bring that conscience and that truth in connection with each other. We may range the consciences of humanity in three states: those that are

slumbering, those that are apprehensive, those that are peaceful and at rest. To each of these we are to commend the truth in the sight of God.

IV who is the minister? W. M. P.
all Christians.

CLXXX. Morality and Religion. 2 COR. IV. 2. "*By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*"

THE truth of which the apostle is speaking, by the manifestation of which he commends himself to the conscience of every man, was not moral truth, it was dogmatic truth. That truth was "the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ" as the "light of the glory of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ." It was not the moral precepts of Christianity, but it was the body of Christian doctrine concerning the person and life of Jesus into which the apostles baptized their converts. Now of this teaching it is said that it commended itself to the conscience of every man. This is a startling claim on behalf of dogmatic truth. At first sight it does not seem clear how this relation between conscience and dogma can be so close and so evident that the preaching of these propositions commends the preacher to the moral sense of his hearers.

The idea of any relation existing between religion and the human conscience is utterly discarded at the present day by a large school of teachers and thinkers. These teachers are busy in constructing a scientific basis for morality, which will enable human morality to survive in the coming day when knowledge will have enabled men to dispense with Divine faith.

Let us endeavour to ascertain what the relation between morality and religion is. Supernatural teaching is not the external authority for moral obligation. The law written upon our hearts is superior to any other law, and any law that contradicts this is self-condemned. This is exactly what the apostle is teaching, to judge of the truths proclaimed, by the conscience within you. Christianity recognises the absolute supremacy of conscience. A man who is moral only for the sake of heaven, or for fear of hell, can only be moral in a very imperfect way. Religion throws light upon facts in our nature that alone can justify our

claim to be moral. The manifestation of the supernatural has come to strengthen the³ basis of morality—to give it back supremacy, and crown it with the crown which is “the light of the glory of the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ.” The Christian doctrines of sin, atonement, forgiveness and sanctification, speak to the moral sense of man, and dignify and deepen the motives for fair and just dealings with one another. Men shall continue to rejoice in “the light of the glory of God” because it is seen “in the face of Jesus Christ,” and it commends itself to the conscience of every man.

W. C. M.

CLXXXI. Preparation for Heaven. 2 COR. v. 5.

“Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.”

I. THE work of preparation for heaven.

There must be some kind of preparation. This preparation must be wrought in us.

It is possible for us to know whether we are thoroughly prepared.

II. The author of this preparation is God. Without acquaintance with God we cannot be prepared. Consider the seal of this preparation—the earnest of the Spirit. A part of heaven, a young heaven. Nurse it within you.

If we have this seal, we shall show patience, forgiveness, holy courage, and a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. H. S.

CLXXXII. An Apostle's Prospect of Death.

2 COR. v. 8. *“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.”*

It would be impossible to set forth in clearer terms the apostle's conviction that the intermediate state is one of consciousness and bliss. To depart would be to be with Christ. The sunset and the sunrise are one.

While we are yet whispering “Depart in peace,” another voice has already said, “Come, thou blessed of My Father.” The language of Paul's preference befits the lips of every Christian.

I. The prospect of this great transition. In the willingness expressed here there are four main elements.

1. A higher claim acknowledged. Who could be well pleased to be absent from the body? Those only who are conscious of this higher claim. A thousand objects of interest and affection seem to say, "Thou art ours," but Christ bends from on high and says, "Thou art Mine."

2. There is the acceptance of a necessary condition. We know that the veil of flesh must be rent, before we can pass from a world of sin to be for ever with the Lord.

3. The providence of God makes it easier for us all by the changes, the sorrows, and the trials of life.

4. There is the longing for promised deliverance. In the hour of youth and strength we accept the necessity, but in conflict and feebleness we yearn for the deliverance.

II. Its influence upon our life.

We are "of good courage," this strikes the keynote of our text. With the spirit of courage is combined the spirit of service, and the triumphant confidence becomes, whether here or there, the inspiration of faithful work.

S. G. G.

CLXXXIII. The Love of Christ. 2 COR. v. 14. "*For the love of Christ constraineth us.*"

OUR intention is to fix your thoughts on the explanation which Paul gave of his conduct. People were dissatisfied with him on various grounds. He was an enthusiast, and there were two classes of persons who did not appreciate his enthusiasm—men of no religion at all like Festus, and false brethren who were growing up in the Church like tares among the wheat. But he gave as his reason, that the love of Christ bound him to Christ Himself and constrained him.

I. Look at the love of Christ, apart from the influence attributed to it. Paul meant the love in Christ which begets love for Christ, and the love for Christ which is begotten by the love in Christ. The love of Christ, as Divine, is like the ocean, shoreless and bottomless; as human, like the sparkling lake which some mountain brothers hold in the hollows of their united hands.

Love to Christ is awakened by the love of Christ. We here trust, hope, and love. From simple gratitude our love rises to delight and loyalty; and then it increases with our faith, and increases with its own manifestations.

II. The influence of that love: it constraineth us. It holds us to one object of life, so that we can say, "for me to live is Christ." There was none but Christ to the active-minded and energetic Paul. Christ's love quickened his conscience, commanded his will, and moulded his entire life.

Does the love of Christ constrain us? Do we bless the men who are trying to make a compromise between ungodly principles and Christian principle? Happy are the men who are often misunderstood and misinterpreted.

It filled Paul with passion. A man with no emotion, with no religious excitement, cannot be a Christian. The guiltiest piece of humanity that ever was created by God must be warmed by the Gospel if the Gospel be believed.

S. M.

CLXXXIV. Henceforth. 2 COR. v. 15. "*That they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.*"

THE moment of conversion is the watershed of life.

I. Mark what precedes it. Paul gives three descriptions

1. Living to ourselves.
2. Walking as other Gentiles walk.
3. Serving sin.

II. The life after this "henceforth." It is not so variously described, for though error is manifest, truth is one.

It is a life merged in Christ, and that runs Christwards.

III. What accounts for the change marked in this "henceforth."

We may look either—

1. At the unseen agent—the Holy Spirit; or,
2. At the means by which it is brought about—faith in Jesus Christ.

W. M. T.

CLXXXV. All Things New. 2 COR. v. 17. *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*

I. THE state out of which the apostle describes himself as having arisen, is one in which he knew men after the flesh, and he knew Christ after the flesh. He had the common worldly estimate of Christ and man until his belief of the Saviour's resurrection put that estimate aside and replaced it by another. He realized the Divinity of Christ, and a deep sense of gratitude and love melted him to a reality of self-consecration.

His estimate of his fellow-men was changed. He ceased to make himself the centre of the universe. He learned to see Christ in his fellow creatures.

Further, he adopted new views of the doctrine and meaning of human life.

II. How is this preached? Those of whom such things can be truly said, are in Christ. The expression "in Christ" is a sort of keynote to which all the apostle's statements and arguments are set. Our being new creatures, and therefore fit for the spiritual life of the redeemed, depends on our being in Christ.

G. C.

CLXXXVI. Ambassadors for Christ. 2 COR. v. 20. *"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."*

I. AMBASSADORS are welcome. They are specially welcome to people engaged in a war beyond their strength, to people beginning to feel the victorious forces of the king, to people labouring under the fear of total and swift destruction, to people who know that the ambassador brings no hard terms.

II. What is the commission of peace which God has entrusted us to proclaim? Our commission discloses the manner and the motive of mercy.

III. Our duty is not merely to read our commission, but to beseech you to accept it.

IV. And what then? Are there not me of you with

whom this peace is made at this good hour? But some will not be reconciled. Do you hesitate? Do you delay? Do you refuse? We must have your answer now. Turn ye, turn ye.

C. H. S.

CLXXXVII. Christ made Sin for Us. 2 COR. V.

21. *"For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."*

A VERY bold and startling verse.

I. The apostle asserts in unqualified terms the sinlessness of Christ.

Stronger than "Jesus was not a sinner;" He did not know it; He was an utter stranger to it. The negation carries the denial of Christ's knowledge of sin into the very consciousness of Christ.

This is confirmed by His life from first to last.

II. Yet He was made sin for us. Not a sinner, but sin; which in a sense is an even stronger expression, as if the Holy One of God had been transformed into the sum of human evil.

He was not only a man, but Man, the Head and Representative of the race, representing it to God, and thus He took, as an individual man, the burden of human sin and guilt on Him—as His own. The vast accumulated guilt of the race was present to His consciousness as they could only have been to one who stood in the place of man. Besides, He bare the punishment of the race, for guilt and punishment are correlative terms. Nothing but this explains the cross.

III. The object is described in terms almost as startling and daring. It is not that we might become righteous before God, but that we might become in Christ ourselves the righteousness of God. The highest moral elevation conceivable for any creature.

Let it be noticed that on the objective theory of the atonement its moral power really depends. To deny it any relation to human sin and guilt and the majesty of the moral law, is to imperil its power over the conscience and the heart of man.

G. S. B.

CLXXXVIII. Grace Received in Vain. 2 COR.

vi. 1-2. *"We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."*

WE have here put before us the privileges of the Christian dispensation. First, connected with the heart of God; secondly, associated with the servants of the cross of Christ; thirdly, looked at as in the hands of confessed Christians; and fourthly, regarded as the blessing of the present time, as possessed here, to be now used and now enjoyed.

It is to the fourth that we particularly turn.

1. What is meant by receiving the grace of God in vain? Merely to hear, is to be like a sick man who is told of a physician, but who does not apply to the physician; or to be like a poor man who is told of a treasure, but who does not seek it.

2. Only to comprehend intellectually the word of God's grace is to receive it in vain. Simply to understand, is to be like a man who devotes himself to the study of the chemistry of food, and who, while he is pursuing these studies, neglects to eat.

3. Only to be blessed with the Christian manifestations of the grace of God is to receive it in vain. This is like a man who, delighting in good advice—and oh, how many people there are of this school—takes his own way.

4. To believe what is said of the grace of God, without a personal application of these words, is to receive it in

5. Anything short of a complete use and enjoyment of the grace of God is in a measure to receive it in vain.

If the grace of God comes to us in a time accepted, and in a day of salvation, comes to us in our time of need, it cannot be received prematurely either as respects God's readiness to bestow or our capacity to receive.

S. M.

CLXXXIX. Men Pleasing. GAL. i. 10. "*For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*"

THE only way in which we can persuade God is by taking His way as ours, not by hoping to get Him to take our way as His. Paul had been delivering a very harsh judgment; and it might be said that this attitude was wrong in a minister of the religion of love. But he says the question is not one of gaining over men, but of standing right with God. But it might be objected, "Is it impossible to conciliate men and God at the same time?" He replies: "I can no longer please men as once I did, because I am become the servant of Christ." The doctrine of Paul was not lawless licence, but the service of Christ, the one true and sure way of deliverance from the service of man.

I. Deliverance from the fear of man and the necessity to please him may be taken as a general description of the liberty of Christians; while the necessity to please man represents in a very typical manner the non-freedom of a natural unredeemed man.

All social relations involve an endeavour and a desire to please. But what is good and necessary for a social life must not be changed into a fatal bondage.

This bondage is part of the bondage of sin. It is exemplified in customs of hospitality; in men-pleasing extravagance in matters of outward show; in doubtful conversation; in undue conduct on the Lord's-day. We must ask, not, "How can I best please my neighbour?" but, "How can I best glorify God?"

II. How are we to be set free from this yoke of time servers?

1. We must be in a personal relation by faith to Christ as our Saviour. A life to and for God is only possible in Christ.

2. We must always look to Christ not only as Saviour but as Lord and King. A bare abstract sense of duty will not deliver us from this bondage. Let us ask ourselves whether we are so serving Christ as to be set free from serving man.

W. R. S.

CXC. The Law our Schoolmaster. GAL. iii. 24.

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

THIS verse is part of Paul's answer to the question: "Is the law then against the promises of God?" He at once replies: "God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." This giving of life was just what the Mosaic law could not do, it wrought death instead, it "locked all up under sin," as the 22nd and 23rd verses tell us.

The idea in the text is that of a child held "in ward" during his minority, and undergoing a preparatory training and discipline to fit him for manhood. Schoolmaster does not fairly represent the Greek word used by Paul. The word is *paidagogos*, who was a superior servant with the special business of overlooking the moral training and discipline of the child under his charge. And this was the special function of the law, "our *paidagogos* to bring us unto Christ."

We may ask, In what way did the law accomplish its end of training and leading men to Christ that they "might be justified by faith"?

I. The symbolical ritual of the law was part of its moral discipline "unto Christ."

It was a Divine picture-book, daily exhibited to the people of Israel, by which God was teaching them great spiritual truths. And just as a Jew grew out of a spiritual childhood, he would discover that these material symbols, though worthless in themselves, pointed forward to some greater revelation of God yet to come.

Thus the "law would be his *paidagogos* to bring him to Christ."

Those who in the present day seek to introduce the ritual of Judaism into the Church are going back to the picture-books of childhood, and thereby confessing themselves not "men in Christ, but Christian babies still."

II. The moral effects of the law were a great part of its preparation for Christ. It revealed sin. The two words on its lips, "Thou shalt," or, "Thou shalt not," made the conscience realize its sin.

The law revealing and intensifying sin was powerless to show any way of escape, and led the sinner to long for a coming Deliverer. To preach the law is often a real preaching of Christ.

III. The spiritual insufficiency of the law was its final preparation of the soul for Christ.

Whilst it condemned the conscience, it starved the heart. It gave him a rule to obey, but no Father to love, and so, by revealing to man his deepest need, which it could not satisfy, it became his "*paidagogos* to bring him to Christ."

Modern unbelief would fain rob us of this adoption of the sinner into the heart of the Fatherhood of God through Jesus Christ, and under the name of science attempts to satisfy the human heart and conscience with law itself without a God and Father behind all.

The fatal alliance of superstition and unbelief is at last again complete, an alliance whose end is to erase from the tablets of the human soul the imperishable words, "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world; but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

G. S. B.

CXCI. The Fulness of the Time. GAL. iv. 4

"When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman."

ST. PAUL'S words lead us to consider how the event was prepared for, and then what it was in itself. By the expression "fulness of the time," he means the arrival of a given hour which completes an epoch. Our Lord appears when a course of preparation, conducted through previous ages, was at last complete.

I. The threefold preparation for the Son of God in this world.

1. The world had to be prepared, in a certain sense, politically for His work. In order to spread a creed two instruments are desirable—a common language and a common social system, common laws and government.

2. There was a preparation in the convictions of man-

kind. The heathen nations were not without some religion, but their religion went to pieces when discussed, and so there came about a growth of gross superstition and of blank unbelief which continued down to the time of the incarnation.

3. There was a preparation in the moral experience of mankind. Men saw and approved the better course, and they followed the worst, and the natural law was thus to them only a revelation of sin and weakness. It led them to yearn for a deliverer. This widespread corruption, this longing for better things, marked the close of the epoch of moral experiments; it announced that the fulness of time had come.

II. The advent of Jesus was the coming of the Man of men, the sinless, the representative Man, the one Man in whom humanity was not dishonoured. Christ comes to be the head of a new race of men, who, by faith and love, become united to Him, so as to share His merits, His moral wealth, His matchless glory. He and His revelation have on them the clear mark of eternity. He can bring all whose hearts are not closed against His advances, by wilful sin, into their right relation towards God and towards each other.

H. P. L.

CXCII. Zeal. GAL. iv. 18. *"But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you."*

LET us dwell upon the nature, upon the perpetuity, and upon the profitableness of Christian zeal.

I. Zeal may be defined as the heat or fervour of the mind indignant towards evil, full of desire towards what it imagines to be good. In itself it has no character at all. It becomes Christian zeal only when it springs from Christian motive, when it is displayed in a Christian manner, when it is used for Christian ends. The constraining motives must be the love of God shed abroad in the heart, an expression most tolerant and merciful as it becometh the Gospel of Christ. All the objects on behalf of which its energies exercise must be according to the mind of Christ.

II. The pith of the apostle's warning lies here: "It is good to be zealously affected *always*." The Galatians in the presence of the apostle were warm and extravagant in their professions of attachment, but they needed his presence. He therefore reminds them that zeal to be valuable must be permanent. Our zeal for Christ must be as the vestal fire of old, never suffered to go out either by day or night.

III. Christian zeal is good. No higher praise can be given to it. It is good! the very thing that was said of the fairly finished earth on the morning of Jehovah's rest and pleasure. It is good! the very thing that is spoken of God Himself, "Thou art good, and doest good." It is good in itself; it is good in its influences. Who shall estimate the effect upon the progress of the Redeemer's kingdom when the Church is filled with the spirit of Christian zeal?

W. M. P.

CXCIII. Hindrances. GAL. v. 7. "*Ye did run well; who did hinder you that should not obey the truth?*"

I. APPLY this text to professors of religion. You did run well when you first joined the Church. Yet I fear most of us will have to plead guilty to being hindered in the race. Who did hinder you?

Do you lay the fault at the door of your fellow-Christians? Has it been worldly companions whose fellowship you have rather sought than shunned? No small part is due to the old serpent, the first Tempter—the Devil. God help us, if we have been loitering awhile, to gather up our strength and cry to Him for more strength that we may run with diligence the race set before us.

II. A word to the backsliders. Whatever your reason for turning aside, return—return now!

III. There is a class of persons having a measure of affection which never came to maturity. They were once attentive and earnest, but their enthusiasm has cooled by trifling. But take heed of being hindered. Give up all that hinders, and decide for your own soul's welfare.

C. H. S.

CXCIV. The Fruit of the Spirit. GAL. v. 22, 23.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

WE have "the works of the flesh," but we do not read of "the fruits of the Spirit," but in the singular number—fruit.

The nine graces are one fruit.

I. All the other fruits of the Spirit are only the expansion of the first.

Joy is love triumphing ; peace is love resting ; long-suffering is love under the great, and gentleness is love under the little trials of life ; goodness is love going forth into action ; faith is love sitting and receiving back again to its own bosom ; meekness is love controlling the passions of the mind ; temperance, the same love subduing the passions of the body. The law of the Spirit is all contained in one word, and the unity of the whole Christian character is "love." Fruit is not fruit if it is not sweet. What is anything to God till there is love in it ? Therefore love stands first.

II. There is a law of growth about the Spirit of God in a man. This is as sure as the law which regulates the growth and development of any plant. This truth is wrapped up in the metaphor "the fruit of the Spirit." If there is not advance in the image of Christ, it is because the work of the Holy Ghost is obstructed, for the Spirit, in Himself, always essentially grows.

III. To be fruit-bearers we must be engrafted into the True Vine.

If there is one state more solemn than another it is the leafy state. What if Jesus, drawing nigh to any one of us and finding nothing but leaves, should punish the barrenness which is wilful by the barrenness which is judicial : "No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever."

J. V.

CXCV. Burdens. GAL. vi. 5. *"Every man shall bear his own burden."* GAL. vi. 2. *"Bear ye one another's burdens."* Ps. xxv. 22. *"Cast thy burden on the Lord."*

THERE is a threefold cord not easily broken. There is no contradiction, not the slightest discordance in these texts.

I. God has ordained that every one shall bear a burden. Some burdens are inseparable ; deliverance from them is impossible.

The burden of sorrow visits alike the palace and the hut. Every man must bear that burden. Our responsibilities, our physical infirmities, the difficulties of work, we all must bear them ; no one can carry them for us.

II. There are loads we can help others to carry, and thus learn sympathy. There is a sense in which we can bear each other's burdens and trials. No man is beyond the reach of human sympathy. Often a light lift, a mere touch, helps us over sorrow marvellously. If we get faint with discouragement, let us take hold of Christ and He will help us to carry our burden.

III. The third text takes us from self-help and brotherly help up to the Divine help. God does not release us from performance of duty, but He will sustain us in doing it. The load will not crush us, God's love will carry us and our burden too.

The most overwhelming burden in God's universe is sin. Jesus Christ bore that burden for us.

T. L. C.

CXCVI. Sowing and Reaping. GAL. vi. 7, 8. "*Be not deceived ; God is not mocked : for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*"

I. SOWING and reaping is an example of a principle seen everywhere in the government of God. An act performed at one time leads to products at a future time. See this exemplified in nature and also in human character.

II. Consider the application of the principle to corrupt human nature : "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." Man, when he comes into the world, has seeds in his very nature, tendencies to act for good and for evil. The tendency to evil grows unless it is restrained. The roots strike themselves deeper into the soil, and the seeds of evil develop in the course of years.

See this exemplified in intemperance, in pride, in all temptations and lusts.

III. The application to regenerated nature: "He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." We have seen that in our nature evil propagates itself. But it is equally true that good does so, good purposes, good dispositions, good acts. It increases at compound interest. Every temptation promptly resisted strengthens the will. Every step we take on the ladder upwards helps up to a higher.

The new nature is in the form of seeds. Grace grows upon grace. In the same way the Church as a whole grows and increases.

J. McC.

CXCVII. Perseverance in Well Doing. GAL. vi. 9.

"Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

I. OUR duty. There are two things in connection with duty which it will be well for us to remember—well doing, and constancy in well doing. Action is at once the destiny and the lot of man. All the conditions of his existence are training for his activity. The text contains special exhortation to constancy in well doing. He was thinking not only of the fickleness of the Galatian Church, but upon the general possibility of paralysis common to the whole family of man. The wants of the world and the wants of the Church demand action. The same motives enforce constancy. If we weary in well doing, we shall be the only recreants from duty. Does the Spirit tire of striving? Is there any pause in the intercession of the Son? Are the ranks of evil weary? Does not Death still stalk, sword in hand, over the great battle-field of life?

II. The special encouragement which the apostle presents. There is a reward promised by Him who cannot lie, and preserved by Him who cannot be turned from His purpose. The moral harvest comes all to perfection; not a grain is lost. Surely you will not be weary, when your salvation is so much nearer than when you first believed?

W. M. P.

CXCVIII. His Workmanship. EPH. ii. 10. "*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*"

THE apostle is teaching us here that we are saved by the infinite grace of God, and not of good works, lest any man should boast. We are His workmanship, and not our own.

I. Think of this Divine workmanship. It is characterized by truth, reality, thoroughness. How beautiful that saying is, "All His works are done in truth"—His smallest works as well as His greatest works. So with His spiritual workmanship: it shall be unutterably refined.

When complete, His workmanship will be perfect in beauty. We, beaten and tossed by the stormy waves of circumstance, shall be so perfect as to please God Himself.

II. The purpose of the workmanship. "Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." There are good works here and hereafter. When we lay down our wearied heads and die, we are not done with service. We shall serve God in another world more perfectly than now.

1. Good works have their origin in love.

It is saying the same thing in a different form, to remark that good works are inspired by the Holy Ghost.

2. Good works are ordained of God.

3. How shall we know what we ought to do amongst the multiplicity of good works?

(1) We must be guided to a certain extent by our own predispositions.

Some are disposed to self-culture; they are not interested in the varied activities of the Church. Let them go on and cultivate their natures.

Some love to teach. Some delight in practical benevolence. We praise all. Christ in His first thirty years gave Himself much to self-culture. What depth of infinite meaning must He have found on the summit of Nazareth's hill baptized with the dawn!

Even in secular business you may glorify God—the work rightly done is as holy as preaching.

(2) We must look at our abilities—what we can do.

(3) We must ask God. Say, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and He will put His great hand round your slender fingers and lead you.

T. J.

CXCIX. Without God. EPH. ii. 12. "*Without God in the world.*"

I AM told to believe that there is no God; and before doing so I wish to look on the world in the light of this solemn denial. In giving up this idea I shall have to make several sacrifices. Let us see what they are.

I. I have to part with the most inspiring and ennobling books in my library.

II. I shall have to banish the earliest and tenderest memories which have gladdened my days.

III. I shall have to give up the hope that in the long run right will be vindicated and wrong be put to eternal shame.

IV. I shall have to sacrifice my reason, my conscience—in a word, myself. My whole life is built upon the holy doctrine of God's existence.

Are you prepared to make this sacrifice to Him?

It is possible to acknowledge God with the lips while the heart is far from Him.

J. P.

CC. Home Relations. EPH. iii. 15. "*Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.*"

THE right rendering here is "every family." St. Paul says, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every fatherhood in heaven and upon earth is named"—derives that name of "fatherhood." The force of the saying lies in the *pater* and *patria*. Every human family is such in virtue of a Divine Father. The text gives great dignity and even sanctity to home relations. What is "home"? It is a society which has God for its founder, and of which each individual father is the human centre. The parental presence is the essence of home.

I. Does Christianity, does Christ Himself, make much of

home duties? Has the new relationship of redemption and grace superseded the old tie of the human sonship?

1. Christ's own example of filial duty—"He was subject unto them."

2. His keen and indignant reproof of those who would withhold from father and mother one single thing which might be of comfort to them, on the plea that it was "Corban," that is, a consecrated offering.

3. His taking the earthly relationship of father and son as the one sufficient type of the superhuman relationship of man to his God.

II. What home is—in God's intention, and in the experience of His children.

1. Home is our haven. It is a place of safe keeping.

2. Home is our confessional. Thither carry your secrets—there unbosom, and there leave them.

3. Home is our friend. It is the dear ones of birth and nature who will go through our life with us.

III. The duty of remembering the "home relations" of others besides yourself. Let the thought make you sympathetic. Towards those beneath you in station, let it teach you consideration. Beware of so treating your own home in the present as that it shall be the bitterest memory to you in the future.

Let your home relations take in the dead. It shall give sweetness to your prayers, reality to your hopes, and sanctity to your conduct towards the living.

C. J. V.

CCI. Grace and Gifts. EPH. iv. 7. *"Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."*

ST. PAUL is contrasting the unity of the faith and Church of Christ with the different gifts bestowed upon its members; and he traces the bestowal of these gifts to our Lord's ascension into heaven. The descent of the Spirit was the first fruit of our Lord's session in heaven. "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." And among these gifts St. Paul names evangelists. The evangelist of the early apostolic age was a connecting-link between the founders of Churches

and those who had the care of them when founded—a kind of travelling missionary. Towards the close of the apostolic age the Gospels were written,—two by apostles, two under apostolic direction, by simple evangelists. St. Mark has more in common with St. Matthew than with any other evangelist. Like St. Matthew, he seems to think in Hebrew though he writes in Greek. Each evangelist had a separate set of readers in view, although dealing with the same great subject, and their common motto might well have been, “Unto every one of us is given grace for our several lines of work, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

I. We depend for our religious, as well as for our mental and physical life, upon the Source of all good. Unto every one is given whatever we have. The grace which was needed was given to each evangelist—partly consisting in certain opportunities of becoming acquainted with the facts, and partly in an inward guidance as to selecting and arranging materials. St. Mark had this great advantage, that, although he had never been an actual disciple of our Lord, he was in later life in the position of secretary to the first apostle. He is remarkable for his great attention to details, and for the absence of a clearly discernible purpose in his Gospel over and above the simple narrative of our Lord’s life on earth.

II. No two souls are endowed in an exactly similar way. And for the difference of endowment there is a reason in the Divine mind, for each soul in its generation has its appointed work to do, and is endowed with suitable grace for its performance.

H. P. L.

CCII. Growth through the Truth. EPH. iv. 15.

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up unto Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ.”

OUR text suggests some reflections on the subject of Christian growth, and it sets before us as the leading practical characteristic of true Christian growth—truth, pure and simple. The element in which all spiritual increase proceeds is “speaking the truth in love ;” the emphasis is not

to be laid on speaking, it is truthful dealing in love. It is not truthfulness rooted in self-respect, but in love.

The truthful dealing spoken of is truthful dealing towards Christ, and truthfulness to them that are His. Into the first of these two points I shall not enter. Truthful dealing with the brethren is the way in which a sincere heart towards our common head must chiefly manifest itself.

1. The text assumes that if we are Christians, our daily conversation will be mainly with our fellow-Christians. We have no right to seek for any society of the faithful narrower than the Church.

2. We are to be truthful to our profession. A profession of obedience to Christ, is a profession of willingness to sacrifice ourselves for them that are His.

3. Where there is this honesty of purpose toward the brethren, we shall be sure to find candour, simplicity, and plain truthfulness in every act of life.

4. The test of Christian truthfulness is true dealing with ourselves when we commit sin, and true dealing with the brethren when they fall.

5. It is plain, that truthful dealing in these ways is possible only if, as the apostle says, it is truth speaking in love. If I love Christ because He first loved me, if loving Him I love them that are His, then it will be easy for me to deal truly in this love. Living thus we shall be able to feel that we being many are one body, that we are not alone in our faith in Christ, that all round us His grace is building up a living temple to His glory.

W. R. S.

CCIII. Saints. EPH. v. 3. "*As becometh saints.*"

MANY words are becoming lowered in their meaning. But this word seems a kind of exception, for it seems to be used in a somewhat higher and more transcendent sense than what we find in the New Testament. The Roman Catholics appear to restrict it to those who, after due examination, have received a patent of spiritual nobility; and we to the elect of the elect, the aristocracy of the kingdom of God.

I. Consider the new Testament use of the word.

It means the whole body of professed believers—transferred from the Church of the elder dispensation to the Church of the new. Six Epistles of Paul at least are addressed to saints, and we find in them reproofs so stern and piercing that one has said the Epistle to the Corinthians seemed to him, in spite of its beginning, an Epistle addressed to sinners.

It means dedication to God. This dedication cannot be accomplished without the help of the Holy Spirit.

II. This corrects many of the false standards of saintship. Who are these that are clothed in white robes, and whence came they? The servant in the house doing his duty; the governess submitting to the vulgarity of the rich for the sake of duty; the old man bearing pain bravely and gently;

“When earth last saw them they were bleeding,
Thorn-crowned and sore perplexed;
They shall be changed and beautiful exceeding,
When we shall see them next.”

III. The fountain of saintship is Jesus Christ. The love that makes the Christian holy, is the love that looks out from himself and clings to the person of Jesus Christ. He is the Saint of saints, the Holy of holies. Loyalty to an idea is a great thing, but far grander and deeper to beings like us is the enthusiasm of love.

W. A.

CCIV. The Fruit of the Light. EPH. v. 9. *“The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.”*

THIS should read “the fruit of the Light.” God is light, and Jesus came into the world to brighten it. The true light now shineth.

Light reproves and exposes the darkness just by its presence. Do not deny the light outside the Church or amongst the heathen. But the clear full shining is on those only who receive, love, and obey the doctrine of grace.

Three aspects of the Christian character—the good, the right, the true. So in Psalm xlv. And it is the side of meekness that is going to win.

I. Goodness. The word does not occur in what we call heathen Greek books. It is only in the Bible—used much by Paul.

It is opposed to malice. The child of God must put away all bitterness. Common sense of mankind is quite right when it says a man's religion is not worth much if it does not make him good. Have goodness first—out of goodness, good works will come. Have the well of water within you.

II. Righteousness opposed to all crookedness and dishonesty. You may see people very dishonest yet very benevolent. But religion twines its tenderness and hopefulness round the immutable pillars of equity. Some point out that the handicraft with which our Saviour was pleased to make Himself familiar during the years He spent at Nazareth, was one which requires the application of the most exact rules of rectitude.

III. Truth. We have deceitful hearts, and God puts truth into the inward parts by possessing the heart with Jesus Christ who is the truth, and by leading us so to follow Him that there shall be no guile in our mouths, as there was none in His.

The light is come into the world. Why do men not come to the light? The old plain answer is the true one. Because their deeds are evil. We do not hear people speak of human depravity now, but there is as much of it as in the days of our fathers.

D. F.

CCV. A Call to Light. EPH. v. 14. "*Wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*"

THE progress of men's thoughts in later times has had this among other results, that we have been made more alive to the seriousness and difficulty of questions relating to our condition and place in the world—our very existence and destiny.

One thing further has been brought home to the consciences of our generation,—that is, that nature by itself cannot give an answer to these questions. Have we then nothing beside?

I. Although we are encompassed in mystery, we know that there is in the darkness a point of light. Christ is come to tell us once for all that we are not orphans and castaways, driven about on the boundless sea of the universe. He came to tell us of our Father who is in heaven, even God. We know that He is come, we know that He died. We know, unless all human knowledge of the past is a vain and unprofitable dream, that He has risen from the dead. We know that this tremendous and unimaginable event has changed not only the course, but the aspects of the world and human life. Our refuge—our only refuge—from the agonising mysteries of the world, is in His empty grave.

II. We know that He who has all power in heaven and earth has promised still to be with us in our course through the storms and the pains of life. We have Him who once appeared amongst the world still among us, behind the veil of pain, behind the veil of our longstanding quarrels and divisions, and hopeless misunderstandings, and cherished antipathies, and blind zeal, and shocking profanations of the sacred name of religion.

III. Let us be true and real about this great call to light. With Jesus! we have that for which we may well join with the hallelujahs of angels. Without Him! why, words cannot exaggerate, words cannot express it. We are of all men most miserable: more miserable—we the heirs of all the ages, the victims of such a delusion—than the most debased of savages. We believe Him. May He help us to St. Paul's wish in true earnest, and to its fulfilment with longing desire, spoken in the name of all his brethren, in all it may mean, in all its wonder—yes, if it must be so, in all that is awful and tragic in it, "that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings."

R. W. C.

CCVI. The Mysteriousness of Religion. EPH. v.

32. *"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church."*

THERE is a frankness of confession in these words of the apostle which deserves the being imitated as well as

admired; for we shall never gain advantage for the Gospel by representing it as less mysterious than it actually is.

The mysteries of our faith are such as the lamp of reason cannot irradiate, and the light of reason cannot fathom.

I. The mystery of Christ as born of a pure virgin. The incarnation of the Son of God is not one of those facts which lose their mysteriousness through being examined. The more we consider, the more must we be amazed. That the babe weeping in its cradle should be God; the God filling immensity and sustaining whatsoever exists should be the babe—who will undertake to explain this? There is much also in the Redeemer's work which passes our understanding. The fact that God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son for its deliverance, is one of exceeding mystery.

II. The mystery of the Church's union with Christ.

It would hardly have been expected that through such a system as the Christian, there should be produced in believers that holiness without which there can be nothing of the oneness between Christ and His Church which is typified in this passage by marriage. Those who preach as the alone mode of salvation the resting wholly on the mercies of another, are sometimes regarded as advancing a tenet which strikes at the root of all moral energy. Christ's salvation was gratuitous, but the very gratuitousness was to generate holiness. We glory in the truth, whilst we acknowledge its wonderfulness.

"Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." The difficulties of Scripture may be made plain to us in heaven, and therefore they are the pledges to us of a mighty enlargement of our faculties. Lay it down as a maxim that when discourse turns on Christ and the Church, there will often be truths of which it can only be said, "It is a great mystery." Believe, where you may be unable to explain.

H. M.

CCVII. The True Motive. EPH. vi. 1. "*For this is right.*"

I. ALL human action is founded on motive.

1. Good.
2. Bad.
3. Mixed.

II. Only one motive can sustain a man through all the discipline of right: "This is right."

III. Other motives are unworthy of adoption.

1. This is pleasant.
2. This is profitable.
3. This is popular.

Let all fall before the Divine word—"This is right."

Apply the text to young men in temptation, business men in speculation, public men in crises, etc.

J. P.

CCVIII. Well Being. EPH. vi. 3. "*That it may be well with thee.*"

I. DIFFERENT estimates of well being.

II. Well being not to be judged by temporary circumstances.

III. Well-being must be founded on right being.

J. P.

CCIX. Prayer. EPH. vi. 18. "*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.*"

WE have seen the apostle piling on armour upon the Christian till he stands before us a shining pillar of steel. One thing only he needs—constant prayer—to use his armour effectively. The characteristics of Christian devotion are set before us in the text.

I. Constancy: "Praying always." Not constant articulate expression, but constant prayerful disposition.

II. Variety: "with all prayer," *i.e.*, every conceivable variety—supplication, contemplation, thanksgiving, ejaculation, arrow flights sent up in the midst of protracted

business. Everything that can cross a human spirit can all be carried up to God.

III. Inspiration of the Spirit of God: "praying in the Spirit." Prayer thus inspired will not be mechanical and formal. To gain this discipline of which the apostle speaks as necessary, we must both watch ourselves and the Providence of God. When a man prays thus, mechanical cuckoo recitation of conventional prayers will not suffice. But we need fixed hours of devotion. I do not believe in a prayer diffused through life like a comet's tail without nucleus through space.

A. M.

CCX. Final Perseverance. PHIL. i. 6. "*Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*"

OUR text speaks of the strong confidence which Christian people may cherish of continued progress and eternal salvation. We ask, why did Paul think thus? By what consideration may we justify and strengthen this holy confidence?

I. God's promise tells us that this is so.

This text should be taken as a direct promise of God. Paul is himself in the strife, and he speaks to us as but one of the many in the universal conflict of believing souls, and he rings out this grand assurance of ultimate victory, not for himself as a privileged person, but for the great and for the weak alike.

II. God's habits confirm this assurance.

He says, "My ways are not as your ways." He has ways of His own—high and holy ways which we may know and see whether He keeps His promise. We take all the regularities of nature as examples of the acts and habits of God. We take them as strong and continual confirmation of His constancy in the operations of that higher world in which our souls now live through Jesus Christ. All nature says, "He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it."

III. Christian experience confirms this assurance. Christian people do persevere. It is a wonderful thing,

and a proof that God is working in them, that Christians hold on their way amid temptations and the daily struggles of life.

IV. Death is a witness to this same thing.

We might ask the king of terrors how often he has been vanquished even by the weakest souls, and how often he has fled away from the death-bed, because it was becoming a life-bed, rising into a house of God, shining like the gate of heaven, and if we had his answers truly, they would mightily confirm the truth of our text, that He who hath begun a good work in the souls of men, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

A. R.

CCXI. Paul's Confidence. PHIL. i. 6. "*Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*"

I. OF what was Paul confident? He was confident that the work of salvation in this people would be perfected. They were fighting a good fight, and he was confident that they would be conquerors.

He was confident that God would perfect this work. He knew what his own influence over them was, but he knew that this influence was nothing except as it was the medium and the vehicle of the influence of God.

II. Mark on what Paul's confidence rests. It lies on the character and the resource of the worker. It does not rest on the Church. He does not say, Because you are orthodox, because your church polity is all right, I am persuaded of your perseverance. The foundation of his confidence was the redeeming God.

It rested also on the nature and quality of the work: a good work supremely honourable to God.

It rested also on the fact that the commencement of the work was by God Himself. Even a wise *man* does nothing at random.

It rests further on the fact that a day is fixed for accepting the work in all its completeness. The day of Christ without redemption would be dark indeed.

III. Mark how this confidence operated on Paul.

It did not prevent him praying for those people ; it gave fervency and gladness to his intercessions. It did not keep Paul from exhorting the people and directing them to the use of means ; nor did it relieve him of his own responsibility.

There are two points of application.

Let us cherish this confidence, but be devoutly careful not to abuse it. Being personally assured, let us try to feel a spiritual interest in one another.

S. M.

CCXII. Love Abounding in Knowledge. PHIL.

i. 9. *"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge."*

THE apostle does not say, "I pray that your knowledge may abound yet more and more in love," but places love first.

I. Love is the raw material, the underlying substance, of the Divine life of the soul. Love is, as compared with knowledge, a stronger thing, and it is worth more practically, "knowledge puffeth up, charity edifieth." A personal affection for Jesus our Lord is the first step, the fundamental thing in real Christianity.

II. Love is called forth by generosity. The generosity of our Lord in giving Himself to become incarnate, and to die for us poor sinners, appeals to the human heart even more powerfully than the faultless beauty of His character. The story of the Passion has melted even savages ere now to tears. The philosophy of self-sacrifice is always intelligible.

III. Love is a distinct endowment. It is an infused grace. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.

IV. Love must, from the necessity of the case, know something accurately about its object. What is He? Where is He? Whence is He? Love will ask questions sooner or later ; and if these questions are not wisely or truly answered, if instead of knowledge nothing better than guessings, myths and fables, are forthcoming, then love will in its deep disappointment sicken and die.

H. P. L.

CCXIII. Paul's hesitation between Life and Death. PHIL. i. 21-25. *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith."*

THESE are words which one may well shrink from taking as a text of a sermon. Their simplicity requires but little exposition, and their greatness and elevation dwarf all that comes after them. Then when we remember the hundreds and thousands of souls that have rested upon them, and felt their grief and great darkness lightened, and gone down to death with the music of them sounding in their ears, like a mother's most gentle lullaby, one may well shrink from preaching about them. We aim at showing the devious windings of the apostle's mind, and the conclusion into which he settles down. The language of the text is like some great river which flowing through some country bends first to the one side then to the other, and then comes back again into its straight course.

I. The strong absorbing devotion the man has to Christ. It transfigures life and adorns death. The one is simple consecration; the other advancement and progress.

The noble theory of life in these words: "for me to live is Christ." Rooted in Him, deriving my being from Him, drawing all its energies from Him, my true life flows into me from the Lord, the basis and the source. He is also goal and aim. Life from Christ, life for Christ, life with Christ, life like Christ.

Contrast the simplicity and power there is in such a life, with the misery that comes to all lives that have a less profound source. Life out of Christ is like the timid navigators of old, who crept from headland to headland, and never lost sight of the low-lying shore, nor saw the wonders of the deep and the majesty of mid-ocean, nor ever touched the happy shores which they reach who steer by the stars.

Wherever life is thus simple and of a piece, death is gain. This carries two ideas in it—continuity and increase, the direction is the same.

II. The second bend or reach of the river is the hesitation that rises in his mind from the contemplation of life as a field for work.

"I am in a strait betwixt two"—a man hedged up between two walls, not knowing where to turn. So we have two counter attractions, death and life.

The attraction of death—"I desire to depart and be with Christ." One thing fills his thoughts with Christ. Our hope of immortality should not be over-burdened with a multitude of petty details. To depart—to be with Christ.

"I shall clasp thee again, O soul of my soul,
And with God be the rest."

This is not one weary of work and tired of life.

III. The reason for living that masters and overbears such a reason for wanting to die. To abide in the flesh is more needful for you, there is work to be done. It is not the dread of death; the man saw yonder a great light and he turned from it, and said, No, there is work for me here.

So notice the beautiful calm solution, "I know that I shall abide and continue with you all." The true attitude is neither desire, nor shrinking, nor hesitation, but a calm taking what God wills.

Here are two theories of life which are mutually exclusive. Here is one—"To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Here is the other—"To me to live is self, and to die is loss and despair. *Which? WHICH?*

A. M.

CCXIV. Obedient unto Death. PHIL. ii. 8. "*And became obedient unto death.*"

THERE lies a distinction, entirely borne out in the original, in that word "became." It is not Christ was obedient unto death, but He "became obedient," which teaches us that in His human nature He grew in obedience, and in His life we are permitted to see the growth.

This progressive character of our Lord's submission is a thought of exceeding comfort. He Himself can sympa-

thiſe with us in the often painful growth of our obedience. We little conceive all that went to make that "became."

These words of the text do not mean obedient to the kind of death, but obedient to the extent of dying, ſtopping not ſhort of obedience's lateſt boundary.

What is "obedience to the death"?

1. Self muſt be crucified. Our great pattern had no ſelf. Accept the diſcipline of life as opportunities of killing ſelf.

2. Beſetting ſin muſt be crucified. To a certain extent ſin is battled with, but as long as there is life in the ſin it is not enough. There muſt be "death." Standing before the croſs of Chriſt, aſk the queſtion, Is there anything living in me which made Him die?

3. Taking rightly the deaths of thoſe we love. When God's command has gone forth that that ſpirit ſhould return to Him, dutifully and unqueſtioningly obey. There is great comfort in the ſimple act of obedience.

4. Willingneſs to die. Make death an act of obedience. Chriſt did this, and it contributed greatly to the dignity and grandeur of His dying. Familiariſe yourſelf with death, as with any plain duty which has to be done and muſt be done well. The ſecret of St. Paul's contentment with all things was a life held looſe—a life always in the hand. Chriſt's whole life was a conſtant preparation and a mounting up to death. Even that cloſing ſcene of horror came to Him as a thing often rehearſed before.

We do not know what it will be to die, nor how it is to glorify God, but this we know, that death is only one act in a long ſeries of obediences, and that they who live beſt in the commandments, will die beſt upon the promiſes.

J. V.

CCXV. The Things of Chriſt. PHIL. ii. 21. "*For all ſeek their own, not the things which are Jeſus Chriſt's.*"

THE firſt thought that ſtrikes one is the alarming poſſibility that a man's own things may be different from the things of Jeſus Chriſt.

1. Let us dwell a little on thoſe things which men uſually call their own. The text muſt not be referred merely to

worldly people. It has an immediate application to those who have numbered themselves with the people of God.

2. The Master never sought His own; and as we have assumed His name, are we not bound to aspire after His nature?

3. It should be known that the highest life is that whose aims and interests are identical with the spirit and purpose of Jesus Christ.

4. Some even seek—how fruitlessly they will soon know—to serve Christ that they may promote their own ends thereby.

5. That those who seek their own will ultimately fail, is obvious from two considerations—God is against them, and they have but one world to store in.

J. P.

CCXVI. False and True Grounds of Trust.

PHIL. iii. 7, 8. *"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."*

I. LET us look at the apostle's insufficient grounds of trust.

1. He repudiates sacramental efficacy: "circumcised on the eighth day."

2. The second repudiated confidence is honoured parentage: "of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews."

3. The third repudiated confidence is religious authority: "as touching the law a Pharisee."

4. The next repudiated confidence is intense earnestness: "concerning zeal, persecuting the Church."

5. The last repudiated confidence is ceremonial blamelessness: "touching the righteousness that is in the law blameless."

II. The compensating power of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. The law of compensation runs through creation. A man climbs up to high places and calumny and care go barking up at his heels. There is beauty dazzling all beholders, and consumption preys upon the damask cheek.

Come to Christ; that is the end of it. Come to Christ! Mark the zeal with which the Apostle Paul proclaimed the truth—indomitable and unfailing—with which he clung to the Master.

W. M. P.

CCXVII. The Power of the Resurrection. PHIL.

iii. 10. *"That I may know the power of His resurrection."*

THE power of His resurrection may signify the power which effected it, or the power of the fact itself as a Christian fact, or the power with which Jesus Christ was endowed at His resurrection.

Paul found Christian life not very easy but very difficult. So it was the object of his life to know the power of the resurrection, and with him Christian objects were always primary.

What did Paul mean by knowing as a matter of personal experience and as a point in spiritual life the power of Christ's resurrection?

1. The resurrection of Christ is an example of the mighty power of God. To know the power of His resurrection is to be conscious of the same power at work within ourselves.

2. To know the power of the resurrection is to feel assured that the Son of Mary is the Christ of God.

3. It is to see the Gospel of Christ sealed, not by His blood only but by His hand in the newness of His glorious life.

4. The resurrection of Christ is adapted to strengthen our trust in Him. How entirely we ought to trust ourselves with one who died for us and rose again.

5. It is to become the subjects, by its influence, of new and enlarged expectations and desires.

6. It is to feel our souls lifted thereby into newness of life.

7. It is to feel strengthened in heart to endure all the will of our God.

8. It is to have removed from us the fear of death. It certifies to the believer that he has the life of God, and that he will live in a yet newer and a yet higher life.

S. M.

CCXVIII. Paul's Desire. PHIL. iii. 10, 11. "*That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death ; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.*"

PAUL is here unfolding the uppermost desire of his mind, which gave its impulse and direction to the whole current of his eventful life.

I. What he specially desired with regard to the present.

1. That he might know Christ. Did he not then already know the Redeemer? No ; the law of Christianity is progress. All that he knew made his appetite keener for further discoveries of the love which passeth knowledge.

2. The power of His resurrection.

The resurrection is the great proof of Christianity, and Paul desired to be more and more convinced of the truth of that Christianity of which he was so bold and energetic a champion.

The resurrection proves that the atoning sacrifice is all sufficient, and he desired to be more assured of the efficacy of the atonement.

3. The fellowship of Christ's sufferings. He had already endured much, yet he desired more. There was something far more precious to him in the bearing of the cross with Christ than there would have been in the utmost ease without the Saviour.

II. What he chiefly desired with regard to the future. If by any means I may attain the resurrection of the dead. Not the general resurrection, for just and unjust rise ; not the spiritual resurrection, for that he had already passed through. It was the rising of the dead in Christ, with bodies glorious and like to the glorified body of the Redeemer, in order that both in body and in soul they may inherit the kingdom that God hath prepared for them that love Him.

R. B.

CCXIX. Progress. PHIL. iii. 13, 14. *"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."*

THE forgetting here spoken of is manifestly a wilful, deliberate forgetting: but to man a conscious act of forgetfulness is in the strict sense impossible. There is a secondary sense of the term arising easily out of the primary signification. We remember best that which most interests us: what we regard as of small moment we easily allow to pass into oblivion. To forget the things that are behind, is to estimate them lightly and to fire the soul with new thoughts and aspirations.

I. Christian progress determined on, and defined by the indication of its pathway and goal. There are five things suggested by the text as essential to satisfactory spiritual advancement.

1. Dissatisfaction with the present attainments of the Christian life.

2. Desire after progress. "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God."

3. Aim of the soul towards a distinct end, "towards the mark."

4. Effort put forth to attain the end of the race.

5. Hope of gaining the prize. This in everything is essential to progress. As memory behind, so hope before ministers to advance. Let hope die, and stagnation must ensue.

II. Let sinners forget the things that are behind, and reach forth to those before. Come and cast your dark past out of sight in the depths of the forgetfulness of God.

III. The text appeals to Christians who are losing ground.

Let such awake and run henceforth with patience the race set before them.

J. E.

CCXX. Pressing to the Mark. PHIL. iii. 13, 14.

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

THE image of the text is taken from the Grecian games. The object of the apostle was perfection in the knowledge and in the fellowship of Christ. If we follow him, we must follow him as he followed Christ. Let us mark the means of his attainment as they are presented in the verses before us.

I. There is determinate singleness of thought: "This one thing I do," not "many things." There is no fretting away of the soul upon a multitude of discrepant objects, to the loss of concentration, and the consequent loss of power. Here is the attitude of a soul that is determined after a worthy purpose—the attitude of quiet strength which will suffer nothing to turn it from the accomplishment. Every circumstance of your life may be made subservient to this great design. Make this your business. It will not interfere with any other. After you are called in Christ Jesus, and after when God calls, He gives power to obey.

II. There was in the apostle's mind a determinate on-looking to the ever-nearing future. He did not absolutely forget the things behind, but he did not allow himself to be kept back by them. He forgot his sins, and looked to Christ and the future. If a man is not in Christ it is hard for him to think about the future, but if we are in Christ we can. Have you a hope beyond?

W. M. P.

CCXXI. Things Before. PHIL. iii. 13. *"Things which are before."*

I. THERE are certain things before every Christian. There is no growth before a self-deceiver, there is no growth in imitations; but before every real tree and every real flower, until they come to perfection, there is growth.

There are things before every Christian, as one endowed with talents which may be ceaselessly used.

Before every Christian is continuance to the end, victory before death, and an entry into the everlasting kingdom.

II. There are certain things before every Church. The human body has not one member but many. Before every Church, therefore, is the conscious manifested unity of its members.

Before every Church is continued and ever-improving mutual service. Before every Church is the increase of itself. Before every Church is the increasing manifestation of the holy body of Christ. Before every Church is the preaching of the Gospel to every creature.

III. While certain things are before every Christian and every Church, particular things are before particular Christians and particular Churches. Every mineral is not a diamond destined to shine in a crown, every plant is not a medicinal destined to be a specific for some dire disease, every tree is not an oak. So there are particular demands upon individual Christians and individual Churches. All that is individual about the Christian, and all that is local and particular about the Church, point to special things before that Christian, and to special things before that Church.

Brethren, count not yourselves to have apprehended. Paul, after years of labour, said: "I count not myself to have apprehended." What does that heart of thine say to God?

Bless God there are things before us worth running for and running to, things worth a struggle, things deserving an effort.

S. M.

CCXXII. Minding Earthly Things. PHIL. iii. 19.
"Who mind earthly things."

I. WHAT Paul does not mean.

1. He does not hold out the slightest encouragement to neglecting plain obvious duties of daily life.

2. He does not cast the slightest discredit on the full development of those natural feelings which God has given to us as a part of our heritage.

3. He does not mean that so long as we are living on earth we can obtain an immunity from temptation.

II. What does the apostle mean? The question is very easily answered if we are honest. He describes that state in which a person resolves to live for this visible world, and not for the invisible kingdom by which he is surrounded. The great principle which unites the glorious company of martyrs, saints, and confessors is this: they walk by faith and not by sight.

G. H. W.

CCXXIII. Our Citizenship. PHIL. iii. 20. *"For our conversation is in heaven."*

"TELL me, art thou a Roman?" The inquirer's eye lights up with a glance of pride and envy: "Didst thou step easily into the heritage it was so costly for me to win?" "I was free born," answered Paul. But in this text his boast is that his citizenship is in heaven.

I. What is the source of this heavenly citizenship? It is not obtained by birth, for we are by nature the children of wrath. It is not obtained by manumission; it is by redemption purchased for us by One who loves us, who has paid the price and exerted the needed power.

II. The duties which this citizenship involves. That this citizenship entails duties follows from every principle of right. Thus, whom the State protects and whom the State defends, owe to it loyalty and patriotism. So in the Divine sphere, if we are citizens we shall cheerfully obey the laws and watch over the interests of the kingdom to which we belong.

III. The immunities which as citizens we have a right to claim. The heavenly citizens can claim the protection of the land to which they have sworn their fealty and whither their footsteps tend. And how glorious that protection is! Over the heirs of grace the angels have charge continually. In heaven there is no inequality. Beggars below may be heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

W. M. P.

CXXIV. The Glorious Destiny of the Human Body. PHIL. iii. 20, 21. *"The Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."*

HERE we have one of those splendid glimpses into the world beyond the grave, of which there are not so very many in the New Testament, and each one of which is so unspeakably dear to the faith and hope of a Christian. This is the last, it is the most munificent of the gifts of our risen Redeemer.

I. The nature of the change referred to in the text. St. Paul describes the human body in its present state of existence as "our vile body," or it would be better rendered as "our body of humiliation." It would be impossible to imagine a Greek using this phrase. They thought the human frame the most beautiful thing in nature.

Such a phrase implies that the man who uses it has seen higher and deeper than the things of sense. According to the teaching of the Bible, the body is essential to man's completeness, whether in this or in a future life.

Our nature, as a whole, has been ennobled and invigorated by the Son of God. Bending from His throne in heaven, He has taken body and soul alike, and joined it by an indissoluble union to His own eternal person. We all shall die as the creatures around us; but if we are in Him, He will gather up what death has left, He will change our body of humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto His body of glory.

II. The ground of this great Christian expectation of a glorified body in a future life. How shall we get it? The apostle answers: "According to the working of His mighty power whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." Christianity has made respect for the dead a rule, has given it reason, by its great glowing faith in the coming resurrection. Jesus Christ was buried and rose again: "as He is so are we." Our duty to the body during life is to guard it and train it. Keep the body from all that would bar entrance to the presence of Christ, and train it as a future partaker of those scenes of transcendent joy

and worship which are described in the Apocalypse. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice," in works and in worship.

H. P. L.

CCXXV. Joy in the Soul. PHIL. iv. 4. "*Rejoice in the Lord alway : and again I say, Rejoice.*"

OF all the Epistles of St. Paul, this to the Philippians is the brightest. There is throughout an under-current of buoyant thankfulness and hope which from time to time bursts upwards in such exclamations as that of the text.

All the emotions and passions of the human soul find their most legitimate exercise and complete satisfaction in the service of God. The range of joy is almost as wide as that of human thought and enterprise. Its complete satisfaction is only to be found in God.

I. This joy is intellectual. In revelation the being, the perfections, the life of God are spread out before us, like a boundless ocean, that we may rejoice in Him always as the only perfect satisfaction of our intellectual nature.

II. This joy in the Lord is moral.

It is the active satisfaction of a created moral nature at coming in contact with the uncreated and perfect moral Being ; for God is not merely a self-existent Being, but He is sanctity, justice, goodness, mercy. And these attributes may well delight the human soul ; but involuntarily, as we gaze on God, we turn our eyes upon ourselves, and we see how little we are like Him. Our Lord Jesus made it possible for man honestly to rejoice in God, "We are accepted in the Beloved." Joy, as it is one of the first experiences, so, in its more magnificent forms, it is the crowning gift of the new life in the soul of man.

III. The power of rejoicing in the Lord.

1. It is a fair test of our moral and spiritual condition. The heart which does not break forth into joy at the sound of Jesus' name, at the mention of His words, at the sense of His presence, is surely paralysed or dead. There is something wrong in our moral being ; for the soul that is at all in a state of grace must rally at a bound to the voice and touch of its redeeming Lord.

2. This power of rejoicing in the Lord is a Christian's main support under the trials of life. "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, yet will I rejoice in the Lord: I will joy in the God of my salvation."

3. It is one of the great motive forces of the Christian life. It fertilizes everything, giving a new spring and impulse to what before was well-nigh dead. This joy in the Lord should diffuse itself over a Christian's whole life. He has a right, as no other man living has a right, to be in high spirits. Ask for this gift of the Spirit, and it will not be refused.

H. P. L.

CCXXVI. Good Works. COL. i. 10. "*Fruitful in every good work.*"

GOD has given to human nature the capacity to work—a power which becomes a blessing or a curse according to the heart of the man who wields it. The apostle here tells those Christians at Colosse that his great desire for them was that they might be doing right, and that they might be doing well.

I. Christian works are the produce of Christian principles. They are in a certain sense spontaneous, and they are produced to a certain extent by influences outside the heart, and they may be checked by evil influences, but our statement abides.

II. Every good work requires every good principle. A man with very prominent and striking characteristics will always be an imperfect man. A perfect man has such harmonies that he scarcely has a characteristic. To be fruitful in every good work, you must have in your heart the germs and seeds, the springs and sources of all Christian virtues.

III. Fruitfulness and good works require strength and good principles. Thoughts of good must be felt, and the good motives must be strong. This strength in the good motive is needed, because there are other principles of an evil kind pressing into collision with these good principles.

IV. Every good principle is the gift of a good God; it is light of God's light and life of God's life. Pray for each

other that all may be faithful in every good work. Do not criticise : pray. And still imitating Paul, strive to do the good works.

S. M.

CCXXVII. Meetness for the Inheritance. COL.

i. 12, 13. *"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light : who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son : in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins."*

OUR text summons us to the consideration of our present heaven, whilst it embraces within its scope the work of grace, which has given us so priceless a possession.

I. A present heaven. We have a work already performed. Our meetness, our deliverance, and translation and redemption are accomplished facts.

1. Meet to be partakers of the same portion in the light. The saints of God are to the regenerated in the world as the Israelites were to the Egyptians. They are partakers of the light. Their meetness comes from God ; not from natural goodness, virtue or such like.

2. God has not only prepared the way for us, but He has accomplished the rescue. "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness." There has been a conflict and a victory. Darkness is a power from which we have escaped.

3. The third fact of our present heaven is this—"hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." This is the positive side. There is no negatfon of sin except in Christ, no opposition to sin in the universe except that of Christ.

4. "We have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins." The root of all our trouble has been removed, to wit, the damning power of sin.

II. Notice the character of the working of that grace which has given us so heavenly a possession. Redemption through His blood. The word redemption means a deliverance by the payment of a ransom, and the ransom is here stated to be the blood of God's dear Son. The most con-

spicuous fact of revelation is the pouring out of Christ's blood as the price of our release from eternal death.

H. C.

CCXXVIII. Science and Religion. COL. i. 15.

"The image of the invisible God."

IT is quite clear that without a great effort, both of the heart and the intellect, we can never attain a knowledge of God. In religion as in other things, the truths which are simplest are also the deepest. The Jews, in old times, were constantly relapsing into idolatry, because they could not endure the purely spiritual nature of God. And it is much the same with us. There are idols of the mind which take the place of visible images; idols of tradition, of language, which come between us and God, idols of the temple, too, in which good and evil seem to be inseparably blended.

I. Consider God's dealings with us in the physical world. We must acknowledge that God governs the world by fixed laws, and does not alter these laws at our wish. We thankfully look upon the world as a scene of law and order in which the countless multitudes are marching along the highway of God's providence, and "they do not break their ranks" but are obedient to the will of their leader. Such a view, instead of shutting out God from the world, seems rather to restore the world to Him.

II. God's dealings with us in the moral and spiritual world. There is a moral law which God has implanted in our hearts, and which tells us not what is, but what ought to be, and what will be when His purposes are finally accomplished. Even those who have not acknowledged a personal God, have yet recognised a principle of right higher than nature, a better self which has the care and control over the worse. Few of us make this better self the law of our lives.

III. The practical aspects of religion which flow from these reflections of the Eternal Being. As our power over nature increases, our responsibility towards other men increases also. Every man has in him a principle of right and truth far above his own practice, to which he should strive to attain.

B. J.

CCXXIX. The Christian Life. COL. iii. 2, 3, 4.

"Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."

I. THE first thing that strikes us is the Christian's death. As Christ died to sin, he dies to sin; he bears about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.

II. We pass upward from the truth of death to the truth of life. Your life, the life that you have notwithstanding that seeming death, is hid with Christ in God. It is hidden in the sense of secrecy. It is concealed, partially developed. Especially is it hidden in the hour and article of death. It is also hidden in the sense of security, kept safely by the power of Christ.

III. We pass on to the Christian's prospects. The promise implies two things—first, enjoyment; and second, manifestation.

IV. All this prepares us for the duty—"set your affections on things above." Oh! how solemnly it comes with all this exceeding weight of privilege to back it. It overrides gainsaying, it is emphatic, and to the Christian resistless.

W. M. P.

CCXXX. The Day of the Lord. I THESS. v. 2. "The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night."

IF Scripture did not warrant this figure, in which the second coming of the Lord is compared to the act of a felon breaking into a house at night to plunder, we should not have ventured on it. The comparison is suggested by our Lord Himself, "Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. If the good man of the house had known in what hour the thief would come, he would have watched."

I. The day of the Lord. By this expression must be meant a day in some unique sense His day; for all days are, in reality, days of the Lord of time.

1. By "the day of the Lord" is meant that day on which He will take the first place in the thoughts of His creatures.

2. It is the day on which He will bring the vast moral account between Himself and His responsible creatures to a close.

II. "As a thief in the night." What are the ideas suggested by this comparison?

1. It is suggestive of fear. The old prophets spoke of the coming day of universal doom as "the great and terrible day of the Lord," and we cannot but echo their language. But if we will, the Judge may be our Friend and Saviour. It is during the years of time that men decide how they will meet the judgment.

2. It is suggestive of suddenness. There is the contrast which it will present to many of God's judgments in this present life. They approach with measured steps. Neither war nor famine nor pestilence come, generally, like a thief in the night. Are we looking out for this sudden advent? A Christian's first practical anxiety should be expressed in His Master's words, "Lest coming suddenly He find me sleeping."

3. It is suggestive of that which cannot be prevented by our own efforts. We cannot prevent the coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven. We can but prepare to meet Him, by judging ourselves in self-examination. We may erect each one in his own heart a tribunal, and bid our acts, words, our lives, all our life pass before it; and then we may hear, if we will, the echoes of the voice of Christ, in mercy, or in condemnation, as that voice will sound to us hereafter from the judgment throne, we may prepare for that day by setting apart some fixed time for making a business-like preparation for death. Death, like judgment, comes as a thief. Death is the antechamber of the judgment hall of Christ. To prepare for death is a man's true and most serious business during his life. "Ye are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief." God grant it may be so with us.

H. P. L.

CCXXXI. Proving and Holding Fast. I. THESS.

V. 21. "*Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good.*"

AFTER Jesus Christ, the most prominent figure in the New Testament is the Apostle Paul. There are many striking points of likeness, and yet a deep diversity. Notice it in two things. Our Lord had a steady uniform sense of His Divine being ; but He did not show it in the form in which enthusiasm is usually seen. Paul's deep conviction kindled in his mind a true enthusiasm. Again, Christ had deep wisdom, but His wisdom was nothing like shrewdness or logical acuteness. Paul again was full of sound judgment, very wise, and very sober ; all that is possible to mere man, but infinitely below the intuitive wisdom of the Son of God.

We see Paul's character here. He had been speaking with his wonted enthusiasm. But he sees nothing inconsistent in this with the soundest, calmest reasoning.

I. "Prove all things." Be enthusiastic ; but test, try, examine well. Courses of sin need no testing. The apostle speaks of what seems good, wise, honourable.

1. At times indolence tempts to indifference. This is the greatest danger of the age. But it is palsy to the mind and death to the soul.

2. Some are afraid to think. But remember the greatest have stood firm ; and the doubts of our age are old though they may seem fresh and new.

II. "Hold fast that which is good."

1. Hold fast what we have proved to be good. Immature convictions are generally abandoned.

2. But before we have had time and power to prove, there is something to hold fast. Even heathen know the great foundations of the fitting, the beautiful, and the good. We are not heathen born. Do not cast off all that you have learned at your mother's knee for the cavils of daring men and the sneers of half-read women.

E. H. B.

CCXXXII. Holding fast the Good. I THESS. V. 21.

"Hold fast that which is good."

THE religion of Jesus Christ is good, and it is our duty to hold it fast. Religion is not theology. Theology is the word of men concerning the word of God: and a high word it is, the highest in the world. But it is not religion. Religion is not rites and ceremonies and sacraments. What is it then?

I. It is faith as opposed to infidelity.

We feel that all is not here—that there is an inner world. We cannot rest on the narrow bed of infidelity.

II. It is holiness as opposed to sin.

Holiness means all possible human virtues and graces. Religion demands holiness, and this demand is a proof of the wonderful possibilities of the soul of man. Religion gives a sure promise of attaining to holiness. The Church is to be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

III. It is love as opposed to selfishness.

Illustrate selfishness by the stories of those who passed by in the parable of the good Samaritan, and Lot's choice. But Christianity says, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." We all labour, we are all heavy laden. The infinite burden of life has been laid on our shoulders. Our Lord Jesus Christ on His way to Calvary sent down gentle showers upon an old blind man there, and a sick man yonder, and a lame man in another place.

IV. It is hope and joy as opposed to despair.

The natural cry that arises out of Materialism is, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Drink long draughts of the sweet wine of pleasure, for to-morrow you are to die.

The Gospel is more than you can think. We can think much, but the Gospel is more. Language is poor. I have yearnings and groanings and complainings infinite in my bosom. I cannot utter them. But the glory to be revealed is even beyond our thinking.

Therefore hold it fast. Do not be afraid of the ark. It has a strange, mysterious power about it. The Philistines did not know what to do with our ark.

T. J.

CCXXXIII. Prayer for Missionaries. 1 THESS.
v. 25. "*Brethren, pray for us.*"

OUR object is to turn our impression of the difficulty of missionary work into this particular channel of prayer.

I. Consider the grounds of this appeal.

1. The character of the men required. Missionaries must be apostolic men, unselfish men, sympathetic men, patient men. I cannot imagine one so great or so good as to be beyond the need of intercession.

2. The work they are called to accomplish. It is no trifling work. The man has to create what the eye has not seen, nor the ear heard, nor the mind conceived, to any important extent. He has to vanquish apathy, a dead conscience, dependence upon others, self-seeking, and self-indulgence.

3. The missionary has no human constraints; he has no human helps. He has often very frequent and bitter disappointments, when he would not be prepared to expect them. He suffers from the climate and its effects. Nor is it easy to over-estimate this suffering.

II. The need of this appeal. What does it suppose, and what will it bring?

It supposes faith in prayer, faith in the Gospel, and brotherly sympathy. All can do it, and every one is benefited by it.

It is for a defined promise, and it appropriates and applies God's best benefits.

J. A.

CCXXXIV. Everlasting Consolation. 2 THESS.
ii. 16, 17. "*Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts.*"

OUR subject is the trouble of life and the true consolation. Trouble of some kind is universally diffused among men, and in the generality pretty equally distributed. Few of God's own children get through the world and into the heavenly home without little trouble by the way. There

is a sense in which Christians drink more deeply of the cup of trouble than others, for in proportion as they are really Christians, they have refined and developed sensibilities. Trouble is to us what we ourselves are, and so is joy, and so is everything. Much of the trouble of life is and should be borne by Christians silently. Sympathy is a precious thing, but beyond a certain point every one has to bear his own burden. And since there is promised grace, let each bear it like a man. See that you bear it at least as well as Job did when he said, "My stroke is heavier than my groaning." Many a man's groaning is a deal heavier than his stroke.

Christianity is not stoicism, and the Christian heart must have consolation. You drink the cup which your Father gives, but you do not hold it up again, and say, "Fill it again and again, and I shall drink." You say rather, "Let me have meantime what is best with a view to the ultimate joy, and by and through these troubles I would rise into the eternal joy at Thy right hand." There is a trouble common to man, and a common yearning after relief and consolation.

I. False consolations.

1. The desperate consolation of complete thoughtlessness.

2. The presumptuous consolation of concluding that God is bound to make all turn out well in the end, and that therefore we need not trouble ourselves.

3. The superficial consolation which soothes the mind without going down to the roots of things. "If things are dark to-day—well then, they will be brighter to-morrow." True enough : but what of the morrow beyond to-morrow ? The darkness may be back again. We want "the everlasting consolation"—anything short of it is deplorably less than we need.

II. True consolation. It is everlasting, because it comes from an everlasting Source—the unchangeable God.

Never can we be consoled for the sorrow of the world or our own share of it, until we meet with Him, the Father of our spirits, the God of our salvation, and receive what we need from Him. All consolation is in Him. He is everlasting, and He says, from everlasting He hath loved us. Believe the Gospel, accept its grace, hold its truth, do its duty, breathe its spirit, and you have the everlasting

consolation of God. Observe, this is how it is to end for us here practically—in the comfort of our hearts, and stablishment in every good word and work; the everlasting consolation realized everywhere, amid the cares of the household, in the honest trade of the city, in the pure speech and godly habits.

God knows, and that is enough, so I can go on with a quiet, yea singing heart, seeking that stablishment in every good word and work which my Father has promised.

A. R.

CCXXXV. The Glorious Gospel. 1 TIM. i. 11.

"The glorious gospel of the blessed God."

It should be the gospel of the glory. The word "blessed" expresses the blessedness of the Divine nature in itself, and might be rendered *happy*, were it not that happiness has in it elements of levity, turbulence, and change, drawn from our troubled and transient joys.

I. The great thing that the Gospel has to tell men is the glory of God. In the Old Testament the glory of God meant the bright light that lay between the cherubim. So in the Gospel we have the presence of the whole brightness of the self-revelation of God blazing with a more lambent lustre and a truer radiance than even that light. If so, what a strange contrast between the appearance and the reality! The Gospel is all about a human life, and in the very heart of it there is a piece of abject humiliation and shame. The explanation is that in Christ you have the self-revelation of God, not the mere history of a man, and that His tears, His tenderness, His gentleness and pity, all that is God pouring Himself on the blind eyes of the world through the flesh of a man.

This revelation is the brightest that man can receive. It will always be the case that the glorified manhood of Jesus Christ is one way of knowing the Father. Besides, the attributes of God are all in this revelation melted into one.

The living thing in the glory of God is His grace. Other attributes are the fringes, but this the central blaze.

II. This Gospel is an element in God's blessedness.

Is it not something to feel that the heart of all things is blessed? But more to feel that God is blessed because He loves so much, and gives so perfectly in Christ.

III. What firmness and confidence this ought to give us, that God does this for His own name's sake. God's glory is His end, means just that God's love is His motive and His impulse in it all. Just below the surface of our feelings we have to go down to the rock of the immutable heart, the unchangeable love, the unchanging mercy.

A. M.

CCXXXVI. The Faithful Saying. 1 TIM. i. 15.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

WE have given us here the reason of Christ's first coming. The reason of St. Paul prefacing these words by the statement that it is "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation," is that the words following are not the apostle's own. He is quoting a saying current in the Church. We do not know who composed it. Like many of the most beautiful things in this world, it is the work of an unknown soul.

I. The saying is important because it is clearly made up of the words of our Lord.

The Christian maxim only put Christ's own words into another and more compendious form.

II. It is important as throwing light on God's character. The temptation to cherish hard thoughts of God is very old, and also very modern. "I knew Thee, that Thou art an austere man"—this is the language which millions of hearts have secretly held in converse with the loving Creator. Physical evil is the child of moral evil, and less serious than moral evil. God seeing moral evil on the face of His works, determined that His own arm should bring the cure, and "He gave His only begotten Son." The frowns of nature and the ills of life go for little against the unspeakable tenderness of redeeming grace.

III. The saying is important because it reminds us of the greatness of the work of Christ. He came to save sinners. The salvation of man is a different thing from

an improved condition of society. The highest enlightenment may consist with entire spiritual ruin. Man has rebelled against the Author of his being, His will is perverted. The will is the imperial faculty by which all else is guided, and when the will has made a complete act of adhesion to Jesus the man is saved. Our Lord came to save men by giving to the human will,

1. Freedom.
2. New and true direction.
3. Strength.

IV. It is important because of its interest for every individual. We differ from each other in all besides this, that alike we are all sinners. And we have a Saviour provided. "Christ Jesus came to save sinners." The text brings us an offer of God's grace and love, and we do well to accept it.

H. P. L.

CCXXXVII. The Mystery of Godliness. 1 TIM.

iii. 16. *"And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh."*

WITHOUT doubt Paul here points to Jesus Christ. We may develop the teaching of this text by a series of statements embodying the fact here declared.

I. Jesus Christ was flesh—a real man.

Some have said His body was a phantom; others have said He had no human soul. Both doctrines are untrue.

II. Jesus Christ was God manifest in the flesh.

He is no. a godly man, but God-man; a double life—higher and lower, as indicated by many circumstances from Bethlehem to Olivet, and from Olivet to the Great White Throne.

III. That Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh is a profound mystery.

The fact is stated, but the explanation is withheld. After reading, inquiry, controversy, preaching, and creed-making, the God-man remains a mystery still.

IV. This mystery is great.

Not a sham and a trick, not puerile and ridiculous, not useless and injurious as the mysteries of the ancient heathen

and of corrupt Churches, but real and magnificent, momentous, solemn, and blessed in intent.

V. This great mystery is the mystery of Godliness. The mysterious fact is God's means of working Godliness in us, and our means of working Godliness to ourselves.

VI. Great is the mystery of Godliness without controversy. There is no hope for unity in Christ's Church until mysteries are left as mysteries.

The lessons taught are these:—

1. To be Godly we must respond to God manifest.
2. To receive God manifest we must bow to mystery.
3. If we have received this mystery let us prove our reception of it by our manifest walk with God.

S. M.

CCXXXVIII. Exercise unto Godliness. I TIM.

iv. 7, 8. *“Exercise thyself rather unto Godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”*

I. LOOK first at the true aim of Christian ambition—Godliness. Godliness is whatever in us and on us is the image of God. It denotes reverence towards God and His revealed will.

II. What is implied by this exhortation—“Exercise thyself”?

1. If we would succeed in this effort after Godliness we must subordinate everything else to its attainment.

2. To exercise ourselves unto Godliness means that we sacrifice everything that is inconsistent with it.

3. To exercise ourselves unto Godliness we must cultivate everything that tends to foster it.

III. The advantages to be derived from the possession of Godliness. Godliness is profitable. This is not the only motive. But it is an important one.

1. It has promises of a large and comprehensive character concerning the present life.

2. The best of the life to come is for the godly one. Godliness does not obtain for us the life to come, but without Godliness we cannot have it.

W. M. T.

CCXXXIX. The Bounties of Nature. 1 TIM. vi.

7. "*We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*"

I. No man has any antecedent claim on the bounties of nature.

II. No man can be absolute proprietor of the bounties of nature. The mightiest monarch cannot claim an atom absolutely his own.

III. Man should consult the absolute owner in the disposal of the bounties of nature.

IV. Man must eventually dissolve his connection with the bounties of nature. This is inspiring to the Christian, and heart-crushing to the sinner.

Our duty in relation to the bounties of Providence is threefold: to enjoy them, to distribute them, to be thankful for them. Seek the true riches, and do not remain content with gold that will canker and perish.

J. P.

CCXL. Soldiers of Christ. 2 TIM. ii. 3. "*Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*"

THE question is put, why should I endure hardness? Life has troubles enough in store; why should I add to them? There is no religion in making myself uncomfortable. In reply, God desires and delights in all our innocent happiness, and we are encouraged to endure hardness because hardness is true happiness.

I. We must endure hardness because it is good for us as men.

He who walks in the Spirit must keep under the body, and no man can keep the body under control who is not prepared to refrain—to give up.

II. Because it is the manifest will of God. God's curses are blessings in disguise. The thorns and thistles of the world's sterility involve the blessing of our necessitated labour.

We must work for knowledge—for fame—for things far better than those.

III. Because it is the training school of national and individual worth.

Look at Sparta and Thermopylæ; at Scotland and Bannockburn. What would England have been without the Armada or Trafalgar? We are sons and citizens of no mean country.

IV. Because Christ endured hardness.

The essence of the life of our Saviour was that He pleased not Himself. He chose the shop of the village carpenter, and the hunger of the homeless prophet. It was not on Calvary only, but all His life long, that Christ bore the cross.

V. Because there is no virtue and there is no holiness possible without it.

The voice of England is potent to her sons. Shall it be more potent than the voice of God? Is there not a voice as of a trumpet in heaven ever summoning every one of us, and saying, Put on the whole armour of God, fight the good fight of faith, endure hardness.

F. W. F.

CCXLI. Demas. 2 TIM. iv. 10. "*For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.*"

WE know very little of Demas, beyond what may be gathered from the brief and melancholy notice of the text. It appears, however, that he stood high in the esteem of St. Paul, and that, too, through services rendered to Christianity. It seems very remarkable that it should have been love of the world, not cowardice or fear, which made Demas forsake Paul on the eve of his martyrdom.

I. Consider Demas, an apostate, after having done and endured much in the cause of Christ. He became a companion of St. Paul at the very time when that apostle was hunted down by persecution. Every convert then had a great cost to count, and his profession was a guarantee that he expected tribulation. Demas was no hypocrite, he was no hireling, but he suffered the world to tamper with his affections, and kept not watch over his heart. Therefore he was gradually seduced from God. It is not

a world in arms—it is a world in smiles, which it is the hardest to resist. Be not too sure that you are proof against its baits. We have no security but in constant prayer, in constant war.

II. Consider Demas, an apostate, though he had to quit St. Paul when that apostle was on the verge of martyrdom. Who could have doubted the truth of Christianity, or refused to adhere to its profession, with the prisoner Paul for his preacher and his evidence? But Demas did this and forsook Paul, having loved this present world. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Such is the authoritative decision of St. John: and what then can come to pass but that, if you allow the world to gain the ascendancy here, you will make yourselves outcasts from happiness for ever?

H. M.

CCXLII. The Great Salvation. **HEB. ii. 3.** "*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?*"

I. GOD has provided for men and offered to them the great salvation.

II. This salvation is offered to all men as the offer finds them.

III. This God-provided and God-offered salvation is by many neglected.

IV. All who neglect this great salvation, are cherishing the hope that somehow or other they will, after all, escape.

V. Escape in the neglect of the Gospel salvation is an absolute impossibility. Be advised then, and listen now to the overtures of peace which God is making. Put away your indifference and accept His grace in Christ.

W. M. T.

CCXLIII. The Heavenly Rest. **HEB. iv. 11.** "*Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.*"

THESE words illustrate the truth that the whole history of the Jewish Church was one long prophecy and type of the

Christian Church in every age. The rest of Canaan typified the higher and nobler "rest of heaven," and we are warned in the text that unbelief will surely exclude from that rest.

I. The Gospel revelation meets all the deepest needs of man.

It holds out to him, weary with the conflict of life, the hope of an eternal rest. In the fulness of early vigour the promise of rest may be passed by as a thing little cared for; but as the years go by we welcome the thought of perfect rest, as the weary traveller welcomes the sight of home.

II. The Gospel revelation promises a "rest" compatible with the noblest and highest activity of all the powers he possesses.

After a time of perfect rest, our natures would begin to yearn for a "renewal of youth" for fresh endeavours and attainments. The hope is held out to us of exchanging a frail body for one "raised in glory" and "in power," with capacities of exertion and endurance unimaginable here; and the soul, for ever freed from its limitations of knowledge, and from its sin, shall rise to unknown heights of intellectual and spiritual elevation. To be possessors of "eternal life," when all the powers of our nature are being exerted to their full capacity of energy in achievement and service, and yet to have all the peace and repose that "rest" means, this is a heaven which alone fully satisfies man, and this is the future the Gospel reveals.

Heaven is often carnalized into a place of sensuous ease and selfish enjoyment; but the Gospel is not responsible for our perversions of its revelation.

III. Faith is the necessary condition of this spiritual life.

Life in God on this side of the grave is the condition of life in God on the other. That life is "hid with Christ in God," and we can only live it as we live "by faith, not by sight." The warning from the exclusion of Israel from the land of promise through unbelief, comes to us: "Let us labour to enter into rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

G. S. B

CCXLIV. Profound Spiritual Knowledge. Heb.

v. 12-14. *"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."*

THE passage enforces the importance of cultivating a profound knowledge of the highest and deepest truths. This may be brought home by the following considerations:—

1. It is a sin to neglect any part of God's oracles.
2. Profound spiritual knowledge is necessary in order to teach others.
3. It is necessary to keep us in times when false doctrine is influential.
4. The profounder one's knowledge of the greatest truths, the greater one's humility.
5. This profound knowledge of Divine truth increases the lovingness of a man's nature.
6. Sectarianism owes its existence to a want of knowledge of the highest central truths.
7. The oracles of God are the instruments of our personal sanctification.
8. Our surest present enjoyment and our happiest views of the future of the Church depend on our knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.

C. F. D.

X

CCXLV. The Old Old Story. Heb. vii. 25. *"Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."*

I. THE ground of the comfort here offered to every sinner that comes to Christ; namely, that Jesus Christ ever liveth to make intercession for sinners that come unto God by Him.

He is a living Saviour. He abideth for ever.

He dies no more, but He never ceases to plead.

He is a living, a sympathising, and an active Saviour.

II. To whom is this comfort given? Them that come unto God by Him.

Some do not come to God at all. But all who come by Him, no matter what they are, or may have been, may obtain salvation.

We come to God by repentance and prayer, but the saving way is by faith.

III. Inquire more particularly into the comfort there is in the text. "To the uttermost." What does that mean?

1. The uttermost of human sins, whatever that uttermost sin may be.

2. The uttermost of despair.

3. The uttermost of evil habit.

4. The uttermost of temptation.

5. The uttermost of time.

C. H. S.

CCXLVI. The Son of Man. HEB. vii. 26. "*For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.*"

THE necessity of our condition is met by what it is most fitting for God to provide. In relation to God, the Saviour must be the holy child Jesus; in relation to us and among men, He must be such a One that, when looked at and considered, every man is compelled to say, "I find no fault in Him." In relation to His priestly functions, not like those priests who needed ceremonial washings to qualify themselves, He was always undefiled, and ever ready to make intercession for men. He is thus constituted God's Gospel to every creature.

I. Let us ask why Christ's humanity, thus characterized, should be regarded as singular and strange? We have here an instance of a Man who realizes perfectly man's ideal of what He ought to be. In no other, from the birth of Adam to the present hour, did man rise to the full stature of human nature. He was the One who could satisfy the rying wants and requirements of our nature,

and not only so, but could magnify them, magnify the law and make it holy. He became the desire of all nations. From the far East there were those following the lead of their desires and the heavenly light asking, "Where is He who should be born?" and there hung about the temple gates wise and devout men "waiting for the consolation of Israel."

II. It is objected that Jesus was a deceiver. If so, He was guilty of a deception more beautiful and mighty than every other reality; a deception for which He laboured, suffered and died. Then was He self-deceived? No, He was able to draw more fairly and tenderly the lines of every moral distinction than they ever were drawn before.

III. Are the historic consequences such as to justify our belief in Him? No Christian nation has ever died. The power of the world is a Christian power, and you can only trace it back to that solitary Man, the Son of Man, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. His pathway over this world is ineffaceable, and His pathway to heaven cannot be closed.

W. P.

CCXLVII. Death and Judgment. HEB. ix. 27. "*It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*"

I. THIS passage, beyond all its solemnity, does honour to man. It declares that death leaves his essential nature untouched. After death he is still man. No affection, no principle of human nature is lost.

II. These two appearances of man correspond with the two appearances of Christ, the Representative Man of the race. As Christ inherits to eternity what He acquired in His earthly humanity, so shall we.

III. Our brief planetary existence is quite long enough for the inner, the essential man, to take the stamp, spirit, and general character of His endless after life.

IV. In the present outer court or vestibule of our nature our essential humanity is in process of formation. And who can fail to admire the justice and mercy of the Divine provision by which the hereditary nature, formed independently of our personal choice, is not permitted to be

our final nature ; but every man's final nature shall be the result of the choice and co-operation of his own will and personality.

V. A man is under no absolute necessity of considering the bearings of his present life on his future. It is not more time we want, but more will.

VI. Whether we are made out of heaven for heaven, or out of more dusky elements for the dusky world, we shall have to keep our appointment.

VII. By death we go into the searching room of truth. That will not harm us if we invite the truth to search us beforehand.

VIII. It is wise and friendly that time should close with us and eternity open.

IX. Time is a surprising mercy before eternity begins.

X. Every man's look forward depends on his look backward.

XI. If the heavenly nature is not in us, it is impossible that the judgment of God should put us into the society of heavenly persons.

XII. You shall not be adjudged to a place outside heaven, unless you adjudge Christ to a place outside your souls.

J. Pu.

CCXLVIII. The one Sacrifice. HEB. x. 12. "*One sacrifice for sins for ever.*"

THE efficacy of Christ's sacrifice can never cease, it can never be repeated, it can never wear out, it is for eternity.

There is an exceeding grandeur about everything which can be done only "once." Death and judgment and the atonement are of this character. They can only be "once."

The cross is magnificently fearful in its perfect isolation. It is the one manifestation of the eternal Father. All grace and glory revolve about it as their common centre.

I. The Sacrifice. It was the Son of God. All nature, the angels, the saints, sinners, His own lips, the very centurion, confessed to that truth, the Son of God. And if it was the Son of God, then it outweighs the universe.

One drop of the blood of the Son of God is more than equivalent in God's sight to the crime of the universe. Nothing created, nothing finite, can be any common measure with Deity. "One sacrifice for sins for ever." Look at the unity and completeness of the sacrifice. The Lord Jesus is at once the Priest, the Saviour, the Altar and the Victim. All that we have to do with "sacrifice" now is to present the sacrificed One upon our faith to God.

II. Observe the word "for ever."

It would be a false and presumptuous interpretation to say that it meant that present pardon covers future sin. God forbid that any should so abuse God's mercy as to think that God does not see sin in His own people, or that because we are in a state of justification therefore we may do what we like, the debt being paid, and guilt cancelled. Holiness is the great end of the cross. Pardon, peace, salvation, happiness, are only means to holiness. But this fountain for sin and uncleanness is always flowing and always open. It is "one," but it is all, and for all, through all ages, "one sacrifice for sins for ever."

J. V.

CCXLIX. The Expectation of Christ. HEB. x. 13. *"From henceforth expecting."*

THESE words proclaimed the attitude and occupation of our risen Lord. The world is full of thoughts about the Christ of the past and the Christ of the future, but it needs its attention to be called and recalled to the Jesus of the ever present and ever passing now. Much more, said Paul, shall we be saved by His life. The present attitude of our risen Lord is expectant. Let us mark the end and the origin of this expectation.

I. Its origin. His expectation is not composed of the fabrics out of which most of our desires and day-dreams are made. His expectation does not rest on His words, nor on His wonder-working power, but upon His death. It was after Christ had been transfigured on the mount of joy, crushed in the garden of sorrow, nailed to the cross of shame, after He came up out of the grave, feeling in every fibre of His nature all that life and death could give, that

He made sorrowful hearts burn with joy as He talked with them by the way. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me."

II. The nature of the expectation. If this text teaches us anything, it is certainly this lesson, that when we have done our largest best for the cause committed to our trust, we are to cherish no doubt about it, but to take our place at God's right hand—assume the expectant attitude, and joyfully watch the Almighty do His work.

We must also take a firm hold of issues that have their full measurement in things beyond our own brief day. This is the sublime nature of the present expectation of Christ. It goes not up and down in His breast as He watches the energetic lines of the conflict between good and evil here below, but it fastens its eye on the far-off hills of final victory, where the right is eternally triumphant, and the wrong for ever more put down.

J. P.

CCL. Falling into the Hands of the Living God. HEB. x. 31. "*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*"

THE text is a sudden exclamation of fear and almost of pain forced from the writer, by considering the terrible doom of those who wilfully apostatise from Christ.

The whole passage is black with judgment, and we hardly wonder to see the writer overpowered with solemnity and emotion.

I. Consider these words as a warning of the guilt and doom of wilful apostasy from Christ.

The moral condition of those referred to here is not that of men who have lived and died in ignorance of the great salvation: nor of those, pardoned and justified, who nevertheless have fallen into wilful sin; nor of those who have rejected Christ's offer of mercy. It is a sin that goes deeper and further than these, which is here pronounced to be beyond the reach of mercy—the sin of men, once saved by Christ, but who have deliberately renounced their Saviour and His authority. So extreme a case is scarcely

conceivable, but the writer says that in such a case it is hopeless. He begins with an "if" (ver. 26).

II. These words protest against the error of supposing that God will not personally punish sin.

As the result of the developments of physical science, we have enthroned law as the creator and moral governor of the world.

We carefully explain that sin is its own punishment in the same way that virtue is its own reward. But the moment you withdraw the penalty of sin from the will of God, you withdraw it from the conscience of man, and deprive it of its moral appeal to the sinner's heart. It is the supreme moral effort that the punishment of the sinner entails on a God of infinite love, which gives to that punishment all its moral significance.

It may be a terrible thing to be ground to pieces by a law, but "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

G. S. B.

CCLI. The House of God. HEB. x. 25. "*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.*"

THE passage speaks to us concerning the house of God ; it points out also the way to it, and exhibits some of the characteristic features of those found walking in the way.

I. The house of God. What a Divine house the physical universe itself would present to us could we look upon it as a whole ! But this earth of ours—this orb of wondrous beauty—is but the first step in this house. There is a universe within the visible universe, and without it. The physical universe can never be a true house and home for intelligence. The God and Father of heaven only finds His home in the voluntary thought and affection and will of the sons which He has created. With man's capacity for thought and feeling and will, there exists the possibility of God Himself being refused a home. The universe of His friends, of His innocent, as well as of His redeemed and happy creatures, build the house of God. This house has many mansions. We are invited to draw near to the nearest—the Church on earth.

II. The way to it. Remembering that this house is the home for the thought, for the affections, for the will of God, it is evident, that not every one by mere act of will is carried there. None can enter there but those who have first loved God. There is a way made for sinners into the holy of holies, by the blood of Jesus. Within the very bosom of the Eternal, He has opened up that which is our refuge, even through His own wounded side, and we may enter there and lie in sweet repose, for the house of God is in the heart of His children, and the home of His children is in the heart of the eternal Father.

W. P.

CCLII. A Notable Warning. HEB. xi. 7. "*By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*"

I. NOAH was warned by God of things not seen as yet, and herein he resembles all of us, or certainly the most of us.

When we die we shall not cease to exist.

The Lord Jesus returns to judge.

After the judgment will come the execution of the sentence.

II. Noah believed the warning thus received.

He asked for no further evidence than God's word.

He was in a minority of one.

He held to his belief a hundred and twenty years, when there was nothing to support it.

Some say, for God to judge men is too severe, and against their sense of justice. Does God judge and punish now?

III. Noah acted upon the belief that the warning should make him wary.

He made an ark. Our Ark is already prepared for us, and we have only to enter.

There is but one Ark.

That one Ark is waiting for you.

C. H. S.

CCLIII. Desire of the Better Country. HEB. xi.

16. *"They desire a better country, that is an heavenly."*

I. LOOK at the state of the soul here specified. "They desire." This desire is positive. It is not to be confounded with dislike of the evils of the present life. It is not mere submission to the inevitable. Even true Christian resignation is not desire. It is an eager yearning to be with Christ, and thus love Him perfectly and serve Him constantly on high.

II. The object toward which this state of heart is directed—the better land. We do not speak of the locality but of the betterness of heaven. This world is a goodly land for a Christian. The best things in it are Christian ordinances, Christian fellowship, and Christian work. How much more fully are these enjoyed on high!

III. What is the influence of this desire on those who cherish it?

1. It keeps them from regarding the things of this life as supreme.

2. It sustains them in present afflictions.

3. It gives consolation in bereavement and joy in death

W. M. T.

CCLIV. The Faith of Abraham. HEB. xi. 17, 18

"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac. and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called."

I. THIS incident furnishes us with illustrations of faith tried. Abraham could not doubt for a moment when God spake, but the commandment might seem strange, startling, cruel. It looked inconsistent with the character of God. Then there was the scandal it must cause to idolaters. Then there was the snare it would be to many half-won to the purer worship. Then, above all, there would be the breaking of the promise made in Isaac. Then it was a sorrow which had to be borne alone. Then there was the further trial of his faith in the deliberateness with which the act was accomplished.

II. We have here faith triumphant. It is tried in the fire, but it triumphs in the midst of the trial. Every step in Abraham's life seems to have been taken under Divine direction. He continually waited upon God, and so was ready when his trial came. His sublimity of self-sacrifice was the result of patient prayerful years. The main principle of his self-sacrifice is said to have been his faith. Faith led him to believe that God would do all things well.

W. M. P.

CCLV. The Pleasures of Sin. HEB. xi. 25. "*The pleasures of sin.*"

SIN has pleasures. This must be true, otherwise men would not commit it. Sin is at first indulged in for pleasure. But my contention is, that its value is a negative quantity, that "it costs more than it comes to," and I will give you the data from which I have worked out this result.

I. The pleasures of sin are short lived. There is in them at best only a temporary thrill which vibrates for a moment, and needs to be reproduced again and again. Take intemperance for example.

Pleasure in sin is external and evanescent, Christian happiness is internal and permanent.

II. The pleasures of sin leave a sting behind, and will not bear after reflection. There is guilt in them, and there never can be happiness in contemplating that.

But the Christian's happiness will bear reflection. His yesterdays look backward with a smile, and do not, Parthian-like, wound him as they fly.

III. The pleasures of sin are such that the oftener they are enjoyed there is the less enjoyment in them.

But Jesus keeps the good wine till the end.

IV. The pleasures of sin are expensive. I refer not to money though that is by no means unimportant, but the expense of the man's own nature. The sinner is old before his time. His physical power is gone. His intellect has lost its freshness.

Far otherwise is it with the Christian. The more he knows of Christ, the more does he learn to use his body

as a temple of the Holy Ghost, his intellect as an instrument of serving God, and his will in choosing to run in the way of the Divine commands.

W. M. T.

CCLVI. The Joy before Christ. HEB. xii. 2. "*Who for the joy that was set before Him.*"

EVERY rational being has an object set before it. The creatures that are not rational live and exist for an end, but the end is not set before them. It is important for us very often to ask, for what end are we made and redeemed? We have here one view of the goal to which our Saviour ran, or of the prize for which His course was pursued.

I. What was the joy set before Jesus Christ?

1. It was the blessedness of redeemed men. Their joy is the joy of coming out of darkness; and the production of this joy was the prize of Jesus.

2. The joy which redeemed men may diffuse as well as the joy which they inherit. How many tears may the hand of a true Christian wipe away!

3. The joy which the redemption of every sinner gives to the unfallen creation of God.

4. The joy of Jesus was the joy of God Himself in the salvation of the lost.

5. The joy was the joy which must be awakened in Jesus as the great joy-giver to a multitude of men which no man can number.

II. The characteristics of the joy of Jesus. The joy of love, not the joy of the miser; the joy of holiness, not the joy of iniquity; the joy of conscious sufficiency of power—in all respects a full, perfect, and Godlike blessedness.

III. Such blessedness, dear brethren, is won for you. You can spread Divine joy; you can please God. If your joy be Christ's joy, and if you run your race with patience, the day will soon come when you shall find yourself, not worn and weary on the course, but sweetly resting at the goal.

S. M.

CCLVII. The Holy War. HEB. xii. 4. "*Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.*"

THIS is the culminating point of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The richness and depth of its interpretation of the Scripture is all subordinated to the purpose of sustaining those to whom it is addressed in the warfare of their Christian life.

He expounds the nature and work of Christ, but dwells as much on His complete sympathy with us and our consequent capacity to follow Him in the character and purpose of His work. In all things it behoves His brethren to be made like unto Him.

I. This is the exposition of the ultimate law of a godly life. It consists in striving against sin, and it involves resistance unto death.

1. This is illustrated in the life and death of Christ. The intense antagonism which He aroused was due to the terrible weapon with which He pierced sin. It was a life-long warfare, and it was pursued at the cost of all warfare, that of blood. That exquisite nature tasted the agony and shame of death with a bitterness far beyond His brethren.

2. This has been the history of His followers in so far as they have been true to His leadership.

This has been the history of the Church, and the world has not owned itself vanquished till by innumerable martyrdoms it has been proved that there is no limit to the Christian resistance against sin.

II. Application. This text is true of us. There are some whose resistance has not fallen short of this test. Bishops and missionaries, soldiers and statesmen, have sacrificed their lives in the cause of righteousness. But on the whole this is a time of comparative security. Let us not forget the stern nature of the contest. Let us remember that in this holy war there is not and cannot be any time of peace. Let us not fail in fulfilling our comparatively modest and humble duty.

H. W.

CCLVIII. Chastening. HEB. xii. 11. *"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous : nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."*

THE Gospel has given a new and more spiritual meaning to many of the common words of man's everyday life. The word "chastening," as originally used by the Greeks, meant "education," and nothing else. But the moment the Gospel touched the word, it lifted it into a far holier and profounder meaning. It perceived that there was no true education for the sinful and foolish heart except through the discipline of sorrow, and so the word means not only education, but education by chastisement.

I. The Gospel reveals the secret love and meaning of the mystery of pain.

This mystery is felt everywhere, and everywhere the heart makes the same bitter cry, wherefore?

But only the Gospel gives an answer, and the answer is in that single word "chastening." Everything the heart yearns to know when it is sad and broken, is in that word.

Pain and trouble are not the inevitable results of an iron system ; they are another name for the Father's tender and wise education of His child.

Sorrow is not taken away. It is still as grievous as ever. But the light of God's love has shone upon the cloud, and its darkest places are transfigured.

II. This teaches us how to deal with trouble, our own and that of others.

It is not wrong to *feel* trouble. The Bible never condemns the sobs of a broken heart. Jesus Christ grieved in spirit and was troubled and wept.

Besides, if trouble were not felt, it would not answer its end. God never plays at chastening us.

But He expects us to take His chastening as teaching ; to ask what are its lessons, to regard sorrow as a means to an end.

III. The end is righteousness.

It is not resignation. It is to make us right—right in our relations to God ; right in our relations to our fellow-men ; right in ourselves ; wholly and altogether right.

When sin ceases, sorrow will cease. When the last remaining dross has been purged from the gold, the refining fire will be needed no longer, and will be suffered to die out for ever.

G. S. B.

CCLIX. Sinai and Zion. HEB. xii. 18, 22. "*Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched; . . . but ye are come unto mount Zion.*"

THERE are several thoughts suggested by the passage that indicate the superiority of Zion over Sinai.

I. Sinai was the element of a sensuous economy, Zion of a spiritual. There was in the former dispensation the appointment of sacred places and a central temple of worship; but now we have not a law but a life. The age of visible symbol has passed away. Our temple is for worship, not for sacrifice. Religion comes in the bareness of the Saviour's incarnation. Its glory is not of this world. It goes straight to the inner man; it is spiritual in its aim, and has an element of commonness which adapts it to all of us.

II. The discipline of Sinai was rigorous. The Gospel is a system of love. The people might not touch the mountain. There was darkness, there was tempest, there was the voice of terror. Even when the provision of sacrifice was introduced the privilege was restricted. But now God is near. Our law is the Gospel; our every precept is a promise; the Holiest is not now concealed; the veil is rent. It is a happy thing to have come to mount Zion.

W. M. P.

CCLX. The Engrafted Word. JAMES i. 21. "*Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.*"

ST. JAMES is, by eminence, the apostle of practical Christianity. The keynote of his Epistle is, that the religion of Jesus is less a thing to talk about than a thing to act

upon, that Christianity is nothing if it is not a life-controlling, life-moulding power.

I. Observe how this "word" is here qualified. It is called "the engrafted word." It is a metaphor drawn from the vegetable world. The sacred metaphors of Scripture teach by pointing out real correspondences between one department of God's works and another.

1. This metaphor implies that it is no part of the intellectual outfit of the human mind. The Divine word came to the human mind from without, as a graft to be inserted.

2. It shows its assimilative power. There must be, in the vegetable world, a family likeness to start with, an organic affinity between the stock and the graft. There is a great deal in common between the word of Jesus and the existing aspirations and beliefs of the human soul. Beneath every heathen superstition fragments of truth which have close fellowship with the one true faith lie buried.

3. In this metaphor we see its power of laying the nature into which it is inserted under contribution. The engrafted word does not say to human nature that nothing can be done with it, and that it is fit only for destruction. It makes the most of it; it perfects and consecrates human nature by the gifts of grace.

II. The master benefit that it confers. "Able to save your souls." The apostle does not say "it will save them," that it is a talisman which will operate irrespectively of your wills: no, you can check, you can refuse it. But it is able to save.

III. We are to receive the word of Christ in a particular moral temper and attitude—"with meekness." It is not meant to add fuel to your controversies, it is meant to govern your lives.

IV. The duty incumbent upon every Christian parent of teaching his child the faith of Christ. Beyond a certain age the stock takes a graft only with difficulty. When all else has been parted with in later life, the early lessons of piety will rise before the soul as from the very grave and thrill it with a new and awful power.

H. P. L.

CCLXI. More and More. JAS. iv. 6. "*But He giveth more grace.*"

I. LOOK at the words in their natural connection.

1. In us there is only ill—in God only good.
2. We see whence we are to get the weapon of warfare against our sin.
3. The text gives an encouragement for the continuance of our spiritual warfare.

4. We have a prediction of victory.

II. Use the text as a general truth.

1. He giveth new supplies of grace.
2. He gives larger supplies of grace.
3. He gives deeper, stronger grace.

III. Consider them with special applications.

1. Use this verse when you are called to new and larger service.

2. Use it if you suffer from spiritual poverty. Lay no blame on God.

3. Do not boast of spiritual growth, but give all the glory to God.

C. H. S.

CCLXII. Our Duty to the Erring. JAS. v. 19, 20.

"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

I. THERE is individual danger, the possibility of erring from the truth. This danger may be either intellectual or moral—either the darkening of the understanding or the corrupting of the heart. The allusion is evidently to one who has come under the entanglements of erroneous notions, or of vicious life. There is a danger of intellectual error still. It is no light thing to err in this way, for in the heart of every error there is sin. The danger of moral error is even more imminent and more disastrous. Heresy is not a trifling thing, but is to be resisted and deplored. But the deadliest heresy is sin.

II. We have here individual effort: "If one convert him." There is here a distinct recognition of the influence of mind over mind. No man liveth to himself. How much this influence is increased if to human precept and example is given the grace of God. I want to lay upon you the weight of immortal souls. See the mighty results of single-handed labour! One raindrop is hardly noticed as it falls, but is enough for one rosebud's life, to make it grow.

You do not know what you do when you convert a soul. Think of death; think of the work which a saved soul may do.

W. M. P

CCLXIII. The Knowledge of God. 1 PET. i. 21.

"Who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory: that your faith and hope might be in God."

How is it that men will not give up seeking after God? For this simple reason, that they cannot. The eye, if there were no light, would strain after light. The soul of man will not rest or be satisfied without God. Not that the soul of man pursues this quest intelligently and consistently. But the fact remains, that men will have some God, and rather than have no God, they will make one for themselves. The Apostle Peter says of those who had been Gentiles, but were now Christians, that it was through Christ they were led to a belief in the one living and true God, not a belief in His existence and unity merely, but such a belief as enabled them to trust and hope in God.

I. This belief, inclusive of trust and hope is a consummation of the utmost importance, worthy of the most costly and persistent efforts of the Church. Some may consider it a matter of no importance whether the nation worship the one God that is, or the many gods that are imagined to be. We had better let them alone. Neither is Baal God, nor is Jehovah God. Any god outside nature or outside of consciousness is but a fiction. But taking the Christian hypothesis that there is a God living, loving, and holy, it can be no longer a matter of indifference what an

how we worship. The endeavour to bring men through Christ to that belief in God of which the apostle speaks, is the most practical to which we can guide ourselves.

II. The conviction that it is only through Christ that this consummation can be effected. "Who by Him do believe in God." Nature, even scientifically studied, will not suffice to restore men to the one living and true God. It is through the redemption of Christ that we are enabled to put faith and trust in God. The wayfaring man of grief is now King of kings and Lord of lords. On His head are many crowns, and in His hand the sceptre that rules many worlds. Believing this, we have no difficulty in believing also that He shall have spiritual dominion from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth.

J. KEN.

CCLXIV. A Living Hope. 1 PET. i. 3. "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*"

ST. PETER addresses his Epistle to scattered Christians, but with all their manifold divergence from each other they had one thing in common: they were "sanctified by the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

What has the resurrection of Jesus done for us Christians?

I. By His resurrection Jesus proved that He had a right to speak about God, about the old religion of His countrymen, about the religious conduct of His influential countrymen, and about Himself, as He had spoken.

II. The resurrection has endowed Christians with the great grace of hope.

It is a truism which will bear repeating, that we cannot get on without hope. It is the very sinew of man's life: it is essential to man as an individual, in his education and work in life, and as a member of society.

III. Man needs a hope resting on something which is beyond the sphere of sense and time; and this God has given in the resurrection.

Our Lord taught in the plainest language the reality

of the future life. When He rose He broke the spell of the law of death. "Because I live, ye shall live also," this was the motto which henceforth faith descried as the legend which was traced over the doorway of Christ's empty sepulchre.

There are three forms of interest which might be accorded to the resurrection.

1. Interest of curiosity.
2. Interest of active reason.
3. Interest that is practical, moral, and spiritual; which asks, What does Christ's resurrection say to me? Have I this living hope? If so, then earthly things will sit easily on us, and we shall have inward peace and its accompaniment, habitual outward cheerfulness.

H. P. L.

CCLXV. Blessings at Christ's Appearing. I PET.

- i. 13. *"For the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."*

GRACE was brought to men when Jesus Christ first came into our world, but more grace will be brought at Christ's promised appearing. What are the benefits that will become ours then?

1. The resurrection of the body in the case of the dead, the transfiguration of the body in the case of the living, and the fashionment of the bodies of all Christ's disciples after the likeness of His own glorious body—a body vigorous, beautiful, immortal, Christlike, happy in all its sensations.

2. We shall see Christ as He is. Peter's words describe our present state: "whom having not seen ye love."

3. Connected with this benefit is an official and public justification and acquittal, when all doubt will be swallowed up in perfect knowledge.

4. Associated with this official and public justification or acquittal will be the presentation of the redeemed to the Father as recovered prodigal children, and a public recognition of such by the Father.

5. A gracious acknowledgment will be made by Jesus Christ of services rendered to Him on earth. Ah!

brethren, if it be possible then for shame to redden one's cheek, what crimson will clothe one's face when one hears Christ refer to anything we have done.

6. Entrance to the place prepared by Christ, which will be attended by the introduction of all that can gratify and please. Let your eyes rest upon every gift of God—gifts great and gifts small. But look above what is in your hand, to all that is in the hand of your coming Redeemer. When He comes, He will come with His hands full of blessing to you.

S. M.

CCLXVI. True Freedom. 1 PET. II. 16. *"As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God."*

FREEDOM is one of those words which need no recommendation. It appeals to human interests in all ages and everywhere.

Man's freedom is exercised in three main departments of his life: in his life as a social being, in his life as a thinking being, in his life as a moral being. In each of these departments Christ, our great Deliverer, has made man free.

I. Christ has given to man social or political freedom. He has not indeed drawn out a scheme of government, and stamped it with His Divine authority as guaranteeing freedom. The New Testament asserts nothing but two necessary elements of man's life as a political or social being; the existence of some government which it is a conscientious duty to obey, be it assembly or president, or king or emperor; and the fact of the inalienable freedom of the individual Christian under any form of government. Christ gave us a moral force which made every Christian, in virtue of the law of his life, independent of outward political circumstances, and made the creation of new civil institutions only a question of time.

The slave, if a Christian, was inwardly free, having a sense of freedom, a power of living according to the highest law of his being, which the Cæsar on his throne dreamt not of. The doctrine of Christ of the worth and dignity of

redeemed man was as leaven deposited in corrupt society, and in time the world could not but be leavened politically as in other ways.

II. Christ has given man intellectual freedom. He has enfranchised man by the gift of truth; truth in its fulness, absolute and final. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

III. Christ has made us morally free. He has broken the chains which fettered the human will, and restored to it its buoyancy, directness, and power. Man was morally free in Paradise. He became enslaved by an act of disobedience. There came one who said to him, "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." True freedom consists in the power of acting without hindrance, according to the highest law of our being.

H. P. L.

CCLXVII. Servants of God. 1 PET. ii. 16. "*As the servants of God.*"

THE title servant or slave of God does not appear for the first time in the New Testament. God Himself speaks of Abraham, of Moses, of Caleb, Job, Isaiah, and Zerubbabel as "My servants." The apostles, when addressing the Church, habitually assume this designation. The biblical idea of the servant of God is drawn from the life of the *bonâ fide* slave, who was his master's property.

I. The right of property which God has over all men, as based upon creation. The justification of the idea of life which the phrase implies is the existence of God. Each of us exists simply because He, in His free love, so willed it; and if this be so, who does not see that it means God's right to the service of each of His rational creatures?

II. In the case of Christians this right is reinforced by a second right based upon redemption.

When we look to the incarnation and the cross, and reflect with the apostles that we are not our own, but are bought with a price, we must exclaim, "O Lord, I am Thy servant."

God has made man to know and serve Himself. Our

human nature, when cross-questioned, does point upward, notwithstanding its ancient error.

III. The deliberate purpose to serve God throughout life, in things great and small, is the great characteristic of a religious man. The servant of God need not be priest or prophet. He may be statesman, or soldier, or man of letters. The most prosaic occupations, the most commonplace characters, become ennobled by the presence, the empire of this great motive, which puts the man who obeys it into harmony with the true law of the universe. When God's will is seen in surrounding circumstances, when His declared will governs conduct and inclination, then you have a power which makes men, families, nations, Churches, strong.

H. P. L.

CCLXVIII. Suffering. 1 PET. ii. 19. *"This is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully."*

ST. PETER is writing here to one particular class of Christians, to household slaves.

"Slaves," he begins, "be subject to your masters." As St. Peter thinks over his Jewish flock of converts, he remembers that multitudes of them are Christian slaves in pagan households.

He teaches that suffering is thankworthy, a gift from God, and acceptable in turn to Him, if it be accompanied by two conditions.

1. It must be undeserved.
2. The suffering must be for conscience toward God.

This is it which makes pain at once bearable and bracing, when the conscience of the sufferer can ask the perfect Moral Being to take note of it. Mere suffering, which a man dares not offer to God, though borne patiently through "pluck," as we term it, has no spiritual value. "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." This is the consecration prayer uttered on the cross, uttered, if in other language, wherever men suffer for conscience toward God, and by it suffering is changed into moral victory. There are two questions raised by our text.

I. Why did not the apostles denounce slavery as an intolerable wrong? By advising slaves to honour and obey their owners, they seem to sanction it indirectly. Nothing can well be more antipathetic than the spirit of the Gospel and the spirit of slavery. The Gospel proclaims the unity of the human race, and the equality of all its members before God. But the business of the apostles lay rather with the other world than with this, with this just so far as it bore upon the other. And the exact question for them to consider was, whether slavery ruined the prospects of the human soul.

II. Does not the advice of the apostle to submit quietly to wrong destroy manliness and force of character if acted on? Moral strength, when at its best, is generally passive and unobtrusive. No moral strength ever approached that which was displayed on Calvary, when all that was before Him was present from the first to the mind of the Divine Victim; "who, when He was reviled, reviled not again."

III. This truth, announced by St. Peter, is always applicable, in every age and country. Among ourselves there are many who endure grief for conscience toward God. It is no monopoly of one class. Every rank in society has its petty tyrants. Law can do but little for these sufferers, but religion can do much by pointing to the Crucified.

H. P. L.

CCLXIX. A Consecrated Thought. 1 Pet. iii. 15.

"Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts."

THE age in which we are living is, without question, materialistic and superficial. How shall we meet our difficulties?

I. Our life must come under the power of a consecrated thought, a thought of the living God.

II. There is a further step than simply consecrating that thought; you must act under the power of a solemn fear. Do not be ashamed to say, "I am afraid to do this, and sin against my God." That solemn fear is holy.

III. This sanctification must be under the power of a sublime devotion. That is possible since Calvary, since the Redeemer lived and died.

There are crises in life when such a lesson is wanted; the crises of darkness, the crises of doubt, and the crises of death.

W. J. K. L

CCLXX. Partaking Christ's Suffering. 1 PET. iv.

13. "*But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings.*"

THE Christian faith gives dignity to every kind of suffering. So the apostle says the trial is an angel messenger, with a certain definite mission to you. But he rises higher, and says, "It brings you within the charmed circle of fellowship with Christ."

I. In what sense is it true that the Christian can have a partnership with the sufferings of Christ?

1. The apostle is not speaking of the ordinary sorrows of life, but of the sufferings which we suffer as Christians.

2. Nor does he refer to the sorrows that Christ underwent in the course of that work which was peculiarly His own. There is not in the sufferings of the saints of God an accumulation of meritoriousness which completes the work of Christ.

3. What it means is, the sufferings that are the necessity of the growth of Christianity. Christ's Church is built up in suffering. Every truth of Christianity has been consolidated by the blood of suffering men and women. If ye be reproached for the sake of Christ, happy are ye.

4. All Christian life is progressive, and so the capacity of sharing a certain order of Christ's sufferings is growing within us. In the proportion in which sin is pain to us, we share the sufferings of Christ.

II. What are the sources of the joy?

1. That we are suffering with Christ. The great subsidiary idea to all the apostle's teaching is the love which the Christian has for Christ.

2. Love desires that the bond between it and its object shall be strengthened and intensified.

The link with Christ must be suffering. Love and suffering are always correlatives in life. It was not because your life was easy and smooth together that you loved one

another so intensely ; it is because you have fought together, because you were partners in the same sorrow and in the same care.

W. B. C.

CCLXXI. Humility and its Reward. I PET. v. 6.

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."

I. THE kind of suffering which the text represents is that from which there is no present escape. Peter is not referring to light affliction, but to heavy sorrow and to abiding grief. Incurable sickness, inflexible poverty, persecution continued, and unavoidable bereavement—these are the mighty hand of God.

II. The text prescribes our behaviour in suffering. There is a kind of submission which we cannot help, but with this inevitable submission there may be great pride of heart, expressing itself in murmuring and unholy complaining and rebellion. A contrary behaviour is prescribed here : that humility which is the chastened emotion we feel when conscious of our inferiority, our sinfulness, our weakness, our poverty, our helplessness, and our nothingness.

III. The text suggests the strongest motives for the adoption and pursuit of such conduct.

There is one motive springing from the words, "the hand of God." That sorrow from which I cannot escape is not a chance. There is a hand in it, and that hand is the hand of God, who never can do wrong.

But the special motive is that God may exalt us in due time. God has a good intent in our depression. Consider his dealings with Joseph, David, and Daniel, who never dreamed of exalting themselves, but who were lifted up by God.

For this exaltation there is a season of which God can only judge. There is a due time. This lifting up is never too late ; this lifting up is never too soon. For the sake of the exaltation let us humble ourselves. The way out of affliction is to be in heart afflicted ; we must weep to have our tears wiped away.

S. M.

CCLXXII. The Burden of Care. 1 PET. v. 7.

"Casting all your care upon Him ; for He careth for you."

I. WHAT is care? It is not sorrow, not extreme desolation, not sharpness of anguish. It is a weight on humanity like a dark cloud that brings no rain, and yet covers up the sunlight.

II. Whence does care come? It comes out of the great mass of circumstances which, pile on pile, keep rolling up upon us as life goes on, and weight us as we strive to march for God.

III. What is the danger of care? We need to store our force for sin, and not for care. The danger of care, that forces be expended on that which is not the object of their expenditure.

IV. What then are we to do with care? We are to cast it upon God, which means, first, that we are to exercise the privileges and energy of prayer; next, that we are to meditate upon God.

V. What is the reason which leads us with confidence to bring our care to God? It is God's; He careth for us. He cares for us, first, by the ministrations of the angels, and, next, by His providence. That is the belief to which Englishmen cling when they have lost every other. The providence of God opens the door to heaven, and suggests to us the high laws which govern our spiritual nature.

W. J. K. L.

CCLXXIII. God Calling us by His Glory and Virtue. 2 PET. i. 3. *"According as His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue."*

THE thought of God that is fruitful of all joy, spontaneity, and glad activity, is of Him as a "giving" God. The thought of a God who only demands and commands, cuts the nerve of all service. These words are laid as the foundation of the great command that follows, "Beside this," etc.

I. God's call to us; how it comes. The translation should be "by His own glory and virtue."

1. God's glory. The meaning all starts from the Old Testament name for the supernatural light that lay between the cherubim and brooded over the ark and mercy seat. It is the irradiation and perpetual pouring out of the light and the perfectness and the beauty of His own self-revelation.

2. "Virtue" here means energy or power. The two are at bottom one—the light that streams out, and the energy born of it.

God summons men by the raying out of His own perfect beauty, and the might with which the beams go out into the darkness.

This is all gathered together in Jesus Christ. Christ is both light and power.

II. What is the purpose for which God calls us? It is not to scourge or avenge, but to give.

What magnificent confidence Peter has in the universal character of God. The gift must bear a proportion to the giver.

The gift is Christ. In Him is all.

III. How can we receive the gift?

Through knowledge. Not knowledge of head, but of the heart. We must know Him with the knowledge that is possession, with the knowledge that has its roots in love.

A. M.

CCLXXIV. The Promise of His Coming. 2 PET.

iii. 4. *"Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."*

ST. PETER here describes what would be thought and said in after years about the Lord's second coming. In the first days of the Christian Church men gave a large part of their thoughts to Christ's Second Advent, and constantly looked out for it.

Natural impatience, half belief in God's action of old, disbelief in it now, and finally a secret hope that He may have left man to himself, are the thoughts which underlie

the state of mind of these scoffers who ask the question of the text.

I. St. Peter in answering them, raises first the question of fact : They say that there have been no catastrophes, and that therefore none are to be expected. St. Peter points to the deluge, and draws the conclusion that what has been, or the like of it, may be again.

II. St. Peter grapples with the complaint of the long delay of the Second Advent, and explains that with the eternal God centuries do not exist. He lives in an eternal present, "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

III. The reason for the delay of Christ's coming.

The delay is not accidental, nor enforced, nor the result of caprice. It is dictated by the throbbings of the heart of God bending over the moral world in an unspeakable compassion.

For every judgment there is really a preceding period of preparation ; that is delay. One cause only delays the coming of the Judge—the boundless love of God. It has been said that Christians of to-day think much less of our Lord's Second Coming than those of past times. To living faith the Second Advent is at present a fact, as the first. We know that He has been true to His word in the days that are gone, so He will be in the coming time.

Death is practically judgment ; and the thought which we bestow on the one catastrophe is a fair measure of our relation towards the other.

H. P. L.

CCLXXV. The Joyfulness of a Christian Life.

1 JOHN i. 4. "*And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*"

EVERYWHERE we turn in life, we see the law illustrated—that, in proportion to the moral susceptibility to any object of pursuit or attainment, will be the delight in it which is inspired in the heart, and, as that is wanting, the object of pursuit or attainment becomes unattractive, or positively repulsive. The same law holds in the department of religious activity. To multitudes of men religion is simply

a burden and a yoke. To others the religious life on earth for its own sake is precious and delightful.

The apostle was writing to those who were in the obscurest walks of life, surrounded by a thousand perils, and exposed to persecutions and trials of which we know nothing. Yet, that their joy may not only commence but be consummated, these things concerning the Lord of life were written to them.

I. The sense of worth in character which comes with the deep, full experience of the life of God, manifested in Christ and wrought in us by the power of the Spirit. This is an element of gladness and delight.

A man, when he has overcome a temptation and conquered a passion feels himself ennobled by that fact.

II. There is a sense of holy relationship to God which is an element of joy to the Christian. He who guides the universe is the guardian of our interests; His power and wisdom have become the guarantee of our security. Sometimes even in the midst of the utmost peril and sorrow, there is a glad, sweet, and triumphant sense of this.

III. There is a sense of intimate fellowship with God in which there is an unspeakable delight. That sense of fellowship with God is found in the experience of those who have wrought and suffered and conquered most in His service.

IV. There is the consciousness of gladness in doing the work of God on earth, in co-operating with Him in our small measure. The grandest workers have been the happiest Christians.

Let us make it the purpose of our life, and the constant burthen of our prayer to God, that we may be brought into this state of gladness and strength in God, so that others may be swept by the contagion of our joy into the Kingdom of Light.

R. S. S.



CCLXXVI. Our Advocate. 1 JOHN ii. 1. *"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."*

JOHN writes this Epistle to those whom he personally knew

and loved. What a suitable garment these words make for John's affection—"My little children." Some people use terms of endearment too large for their souls; but John's large soul completely filled this raiment of speech. Two things are taught by the passage.

I. The gracious provisions of the Christian dispensation do not encourage but discourage sinning.

We often sin through ignorance; the Christian dispensation enlightens us as to sin.

We sin through carelessness; the Christian dispensation makes us serious about sin.

We sin through moral deadness; the Christian dispensation inspires us with life.

We sin through despair; the Christian dispensation fills us with hope.

We sin through feverishness and restlessness of spirit; the Christian dispensation imparts peace.

We sin through weakness; the Christian dispensation imparts power.

II. The sins of Christians should not lead them to despondency and despair.

If any man sin, there is cause for sorrow, and cause for fear, but none for despair. For we are not left to plead our own cause. Nor are we left to seek an advocate and representative. A Representative is provided for us, and revealed to us; and the Advocate we have is God's Christ.

Do not suffer the guilt of sin to rest on you for a single hour. Many Christians err here. They perhaps trip and stumble in the morning, and they leave the acknowledgment of their sin till the evening; and the consciousness of guilt is over them all day long like a storm-cloud.

S. M.

CCLXXVII. The Tolerance and Intolerance of the Gospel. 1 JOHN iv. 3, 7. *"And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God. Beloved, let us love one another."*

WE have here a motto of true dogmatism as well as true charity, of the true intolerance as well as the tolerance of the Gospel.

I. The real Gospel is the dogma of dogmas. It is a sentence cut clear, sharp, hard, strong as crystal—"The Word was made flesh." Many say, "I love the Gospel because it is so liberal, so tolerant." If by that is meant physical toleration, abhorrence of hatred and persecution, such an one is right; but if he means moral toleration of error, such an one is wrong. The first Epistle to St. John is to be studied as an example of true dogmatism. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?"

II. The tolerance of the Gospel. A right intolerance will instruct us in a right tolerance. Let us be tolerant to manifestations of spiritual life in forms different from our own. When a great spiritual current sweeps through the Church, people cease to spy into each other's ways. We should believe the best of those who are separated from us, and whatever is Christlike amongst them we should love for His sake. Aye, and for those who are farther from us than these we should have a kindly tolerance. We see Jesus in the glory of His suffering, in the sympathy of His agony and great sorrow. They may see Him so one day when life has drenched them with a sweat of blood and circled them with a crown of agony. Be this the secret of our intolerance—"Every spirit that confesseth not Jesus Christ come in the flesh is not of God"; this the secret of our tolerance—"Beloved, let us love one another."

W. A.

CCLXXVIII. Loving One Another. 1 JOHN iv. 11.

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

THIS word "beloved" reveals the heart of the writer. This term of endearment, and indeed all kindred terms, were either created or adopted by the spirit of the apostle. The word "if" does not express doubt as to the love of God, but carries with it the meaning of "because."

I. If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another, because ignorance of what God means by love must now be wilful. Some professing Christians ask, What is love? We answer by pointing to God giving His only-begotten Son.

II. Because doubt and uncertainty as to the objects of love are for ever excluded. Our natural inclination is to love those only who love us; to salute our elect brethren and sisters only. But to elect the objects of our love selfishly and capriciously, and to limit these objects wantonly, is to transgress God's law.

III. Because the power of love to conquer obstacles and impediments is in God's case most gloriously shown.

IV. Because the restoration of love between man and man is one of God's objects in that redemption which so proves His love for us. He seeks to save us from an unloving state.

V. Because we require to be followers of God as dear children. We cannot follow God in every path, but Christ strengthening us, and the Spirit of God sanctifying us, we can follow God in love.

VI. Because love on our part must be pleasing to God. Some men think that they please Him chiefly by theological zeal; but how miserably have we got away from the essential things and become occupied with the unessential.

VII. Because hereby we express our love towards God. We express our gratitude to the Source of our redemption.
S. M.

CCLXXIX. God is Love. 1 JOHN iv. 16. "*God is love.*"

IT is seldom that a principle or law is equally beautiful and powerful. What is beautiful is often weak; what is powerful is often harsh and repulsive. Love is the most beautiful and powerful principle that burns in the bosom of man or pervades the universe of God.

It is hard to define God. Men have shrunk back from the attempt in holy terror; but John does it here.

I. The meaning of the expression.

It is not that love is God's only perfection.

Not that love tramples on God's other perfections. His love is pure and righteous.

But love is God's darling and characteristic attribute and sums up and comprises all.

II. The evidences or displays of this love.

I. There are some comparatively faint indications in the works of nature. Some point to the many fearful displays of the Divine character that abound in the creation, and they ask, Do these tell us that God is love? But these terrible displays are the exception. Whence that superfluity of splendour that abounds in the universe? There might have been only fitness, but there is harmony. There might have been only utility, but there is beauty.

Besides, there is strong reason to believe that these dreadful phenomena are themselves fraught with good.

2. The works and arrangements of Providence.

3. The human heart and history and character.

4. The final proof is the redemption of man by Christ.

III. Let us answer an objection. It is said God cannot be love, because the majority are lost. But—

1. The lost *go away* by their own will.

2. A great multitude that no man can number is to be saved.

If God is love, beware of insulting His love. If God be love, how blessed are His friends. If God be love, are we love? If God be love, love Him.

G. G.

CCLXXX. Love to God. 1 JOHN iv. 19. "*We love Him, because He first loved us.*"

THINGS are always safe and happy when we put God in His right place as a Father, and as such taking the initiative of everything in love. The "first" love of God dates itself far away in the distance, long before baptism. For whatever is first to other things, "the love of God" is first to it. There is nothing which was not at first a thought of love in the mind of God. Evil—as we call evil—was a thought of love when it lay in His bosom, before it came forth to be polluted by the hand of man. There is no evil which is not the abuse or the perversion of good, and the last day will unfold that there was an early and prevailing mercy in things where least we thought it. If we have tasted something of "the love of God," it began by God, in the sovereignty of His loving heart, choosing us. The history of the soul saved is the annals of God's love. When the wondering question runs among the saints in

earth or heaven: "How were you brought?" the only answer here or for ever will be: "He loved me;" "because He is love." Thanks be to God for such a rock to stand on—"God is love."

Let us ask how is the love of all who love God the consequence of His love to them?

I. By an act of creative power. All love in the heart is a creation, and whom God loves, in them He creates love to Him.

1. He creates it by moral cause and effect. There is always an inclination to love those who we believe love us. Whenever God's love is really brought home to the heart and conscience it awakens heavenly affections.

II. By God's personal love believed and felt. Many have a general sense of the love of God, but we do not love God until we are sure that God specially and individually loves us.

1. This feeling cannot be produced by any reasoning, but only by the Holy Spirit's entrance into the heart. He shows that love of God in its highest actings, and shows that God has forgiven us. The sense of sin forgiven is very endearing, very attaching, and we cannot choose but love Him.

2. The love of God has shone into the believer's heart and must reflect itself. This reflection is that soul's love to God, to the Church, and to every creature.

The question of God's loving me turns on another question, of my loving God. If we have the least going out of our hearts to Him or His, then it is because He has smiled on us, He has come into these hearts. The originating love is always stronger than that which springs from it—the parent's stronger than the child's. He loves us a great deal more than we love Him. Realizing and accepting this love, we shall grow proportionately in love to God.

J. V.

CCLXXXI. The Victory of Faith. 1 JOHN v. 4.

"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

MEN acknowledge that the world is a place of conflict, but they often mistake the nature of the conflict and the nature of the weapon that should be employed.

I. They mistake the nature of the conflict. They look upon it as a battle with poverty, with ignorance, or with weakness. But a victory over all these does not mean a victory over care, or sorrow, or death.

But the apostle tells us that the true enemy is not in the world, nor in the things that are in the world, but rather in the world within the heart. The enemy is not poverty, but desire; not obscurity, but lust. He who overcomes the world is not he who paves his way from poverty to wealth, but he who gets rich by the penuriousness and parsimony of his spirit. Not he who has made his way to the highest places of earth; but he who has risen into the true knowledge and purity of God. The true victory lies in the vanquishing of the heart's desires.

II. The weapon is mistaken also. Industry will overcome poverty, and knowledge obscurity; but if these are not the foes, then must we try another weapon.

Even in the common aspect of life faith is needed. A man cannot do well who secretly disbelieves in the work he is doing.

So to conquer within we must believe in goodness. And not only in goodness in the abstract; it is faith in a person which the apostle tells us will overcome the world. Faith in great principles has done much. But for the greatest and most permanent success we must have faith in goodness guaranteed, illustrated, and emphasised in the life and death of a person. Here then comes the glory of Christ's life, that it is precisely the emphasis of all faith in goodness.

W. B. C.

CCLXXXII. The Threefold Witness. I JOHN v.

6-8. *"This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record, . . . the Spirit, the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one."*

WE are not called on to believe without evidence. There is a threefold testimony to Jesus. The three agree in bearing witness to Him as the Christ.

I. The testimony of the water.

The reference is to baptism. The baptism of Jesus Himself, and the baptism which He instituted.

The baptism of Jesus with its accompaniment was the beginning of His manifestation as the Christ. He not only submitted to baptism; He perpetuated it. When the Gospel comes to any country it comes "with water." Though many superstitions have gathered round baptism, it has borne its simple yet eloquent witness to the holy life and teachings and purpose of Him who instituted it.

II. The testimony of the blood.

The blood shedding of Jesus was really a testimony to His Divine Sonship; it was the price He was willing to pay for the world's redemption, and it was the completion of His revelation of the Father.

This testimony of the blood abides in the Church. The cross is interwoven into the texture of Christian thought and feeling and language. Then the sacrament of the supper brings us face to face with Christ Himself, and tells us that His death was for the life of the world.

III. The testimony of the Spirit.

The Spirit which was in Jesus bare witness to Him all His life that He was the anointed of the Father.

This Spirit He was also to impart. It has been poured out on the Church. Also it works outside of the Church striving with men. To reject Christ is to reject not merely the testimony of Greek manuscripts and Galilean fishermen, but the testimony of an inward voice.

Thus we do not believe in Christ without evidence.

T. C. F.

CCLXXXIII. Love in Truth. 2 JOHN I 1, 2. "*The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth.*"

How much is implied very often by the mere phrase or style with which a letter is begun or ended! So it was in the apostolic age, and the opening words of St. John's letter are full of interest of this kind. He would pour out his heart to the chosen mother and her children, and he calls himself simply "the elder," a name which at once touches their hearts.

The "elect lady" was a Christian mother whose name was well known in the Asiatic churches. Mark that this Epistle is not written to Apostolic Christendom, or some separate Church, but simply to a mother and her children.

I. The moral atmosphere which surrounded this friendship was sincerity. "Whom I love in the truth." Not "truly." St. John means that truth of thought and feeling, truth of speech and intercourse was the very air in which his affection for this Christian woman had grown up. This love between man and man dies outright where there is on either side a well-grounded suspicion of the taint of insincerity.

II. St. John loved this lady and her children in truth, and therefore he did not hesitate to "speak the truth in love." There is such a thing as speaking the truth in ill-nature, not for the benefit of the instructed but for the gratification of the instructor. The apostle warns them of dangers, and entreats them to "Take heed, that ye lose not the things that ye have wrought."

III. The motive power of this love was the true faith. "For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever." "The truth" means here the true faith. This was the combining link between this lady and St. John. There are many other links which produce among men a sense of brotherhood, but they are transient compared to this link. This truth centred in a Person whom St. John had seen, touched, and handled. "We know the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true." Christian friendships are humanly speaking among the strongest preservatives of the Church of Christ.

H. P. L.

CCLXXXIV. The Way of Cain. JUDE 11. "*The way of Cain.*"

IN the first joy of her motherhood, Eve seems to have imagined that the promised deliverer had already come, and gave her son a name which expressed gratitude for his birth, and hope for his life. But she was doomed to disappointment, for in the after conduct of her eldest born she had one of the bitterest experiences of the evil nature

and awful consequences of sin. Cain stands before us as the embodiment of that which we may call selfism. He was wise in his own conceit, and wedded to his own way.

I. The selfism of Cain appears in his refusal to offer to God the appointed sacrifice for sin. There are many lines of proof all converging toward the conclusion that God had specially appointed the offering of animal sacrifices by men. The strongest proof is given in Hebrews : " By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Faith has always respect to a testimony borne by God, or a command enjoined by Him. If there had been no Divine prescription of animal sacrifices, Abel's offering could not have been the result of faith.

Cain's unbelief was manifested in preferring his own way, and bringing only the fruits of the ground. The spirit of Cain is manifested by all who refuse to accept redemption through Christ's blood, of which Abel's offering was the primal type.

II. The selfism of Cain appears in his enmity toward Abel, and in its tragic result.

In all cases of self-sufficiency there are two distinguishable phases ; undue appreciation of one's self, and undue depreciation of others. The one is vanity, the other is envy.

The sin of murder sprang originally from the root of wounded self-esteem.

We have not now murderings of individuals for their faith, but still the selfists in the land are full of envy toward the sincere followers of the Lord, and wherever tokens of acceptance with the Most High are seen, they will try to murder the reputation, or seek to destroy the business when they dare not touch the life. These are going in the way of Cain.

III. The selfism of Cain appears in his disregard of the warning given him by God.

Jehovah said : " Why art thou wroth ? If thou doest not well, sin is a croucher at the door, and its desire is against thee, but thou shouldst rule over it " (literal translation). But Cain could take care of himself. He had firmness enough to resist temptation. He went on defiantly in self-confidence, and was at length hurried to the murder of his brother.

The man who is dallying with strong drink is following in the way of Cain. So is the covetous man whose heart is set on gold.

IV. The selfism of Cain appears in his repudiation of responsibility for Abel. His motto was, let every man take care of himself. He was utterly careless about his brother.

Multitudes around are growing up in ignorance and vice. Do you feel any responsibility resting on you to do something for their reformation? If not, you are in the way of Cain.

V. The result of this selfism. Cain was to be a lonely fugitive. He was left to himself. Enter on the way of Jesus, and so find happiness and home.

W. M. T.

CCLXXXV. God's People Preserved and Presented. JUDE 24, 25. *"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."*

THERE are four thoughts presented to our notice: God's people preserved, God's people presented, God's attributes exalted, God's homage recorded. The first two will be enough to occupy us on the present occasion.

I. Preservation implies danger. Danger to our spiritual interests arises from evil spirits, from our own hearts, and from the world. Our deliverer must have power and sympathy, and Christ is able to meet our need. He has overcome the world, He is greater than our hearts; He has destroyed the Devil.

II. God's people presented. The thought will suggest itself, what should induce the Redeemer to exert His abilities on our behalf? We have insulted Him and stood back from Him, and though He is able to keep us from falling, will He take the trouble? Our text tells us that the preservation of the redeemed involves to Christ Himself a richer revenue of glory. Take to your heart the comfort of this thought; think of it in your moments of bitterness;

et it chase your fears away. Christ's glory is involved in your preservation. Cleave to Him and you are safe. He will not let you perish. You are needful in some sort to swell His retinue at the last great day.

W. M. P.

CCLXXXVI. The Seven Spirits. REV. i. 4. "The Seven Spirits which are before His throne."

NO one who has studied the mystic use of the number "seven" will wonder to find the infinitude of the power and the glories of the Holy Ghost expressed in the language "the Seven Spirits." The Holy Ghost is described as "before the throne" to convey, with the idea of equality, His continual procession from the Father and from the Son. There is another reason why the Holy Ghost is called "the Seven Spirits," in that sevenfold action by which He works upon the soul of a man.

1. The office of reproving or convincing. "He shall reprove the world of sin." To show us what we are, to make us feel sin, is the Spirit's first work.

2. The showing of Christ. "He convinces of righteousness." There is no other power that ever can or will reveal the Saviour to a sinner's soul.

3. The Holy Ghost comforts. All the Spirit's comfortings have to do with Jesus Christ. He never uses the commonplaces of men's consolation. He makes Christ fill the empty place, and exhibits the loveliness of Christ's person and the sufficiency of Christ's work.

4. The Holy Ghost teaches. He admits the believer into those deeper, hidden meanings which lie buried under the surface of the word. He assists the memory and makes it retentive of holy things. There are none who teach like this Teacher, because He knows all things, not the lesson only but the learner also.

5. The Holy Ghost sanctifies. He prompts every good desire and right thought. He gives the taste for spiritual things, and prepares the timid for the occupations and enjoyments of a higher world.

6. The Holy Ghost intercedes. Not as Christ, who carries on His work without us, and prays for us in heaven,

but He inwardly, throwing Himself into the soul, prays
All true prayer in a man is the prayer of the Holy Spirit.

7. The Holy Ghost seals the soul. He lays on the believer that stamp with the name and the image of God which every power in earth or in heaven or in hell shall recognise.

This is "the Seven Spirits which are before the throne. I thank God the "seven" are one and the one is "seven. Where He fulfils one of His blessed offices, there, sooner or later, He will assuredly fulfil them all.

J. V.

CCLXXXVII. With Golden Girdle Girt. REV.

13. "*He was girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*"

I. WHAT did this golden girdle signify?

1. The Lord's excellence in all His offices.
2. His power and authority.
3. His activity. The Hebrews wore a girdle when engaged in some labour.
4. The girdle was the place where the Eastern kept his money. Jesus bears with Him all that His people can need.

II. The golden lessons to be gathered from these four meanings:

1. Admire Him in all His offices.
2. Trust Him.
3. Imitate Him.
4. Let us rejoice in Him.

C. H. S.

CCLXXXVIII. The Cross and the Crown. REV.

ii. 10. "*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*"

I. THIS is the law of all true eminence, of all real attainment and dignity. There is no true crown which has not its cross. Do not envy the trickster and the gambler. Hold fast this faith.

II. Such is the law of the spiritual world too. There

daily martyrdom which wins. Great teachers suffer from eternal fires which waste and consume them. But pain is not its own end; a crown of life is the end of being. The day in which we live calls for courage. Convictions are not sharply cut, and all creeds seem very pleasantly to melt into each other. But remember that through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom, and that for every crown there is a cross.

III. But for every sanctified cross there is a crown. Stephen was the first of all the noble army of martyrs. I have often thought his name very significant. It signifies the crowned one.

What is life considered as a crown? Too often it is considered as a cross and a curse. But though my way of life has often been through graveyards and through glooms, I have loved and I have been loved, and I know that life is worth living. Only those for whom abundant entrance is reserved will receive life as a crown, for it is a gift, a reward.

"I will give thee a crown of life;" that is life in its fullness and freshness. Let us take immortal comfort even here from the anticipation of the coronation moment and morning of the soul. He whose are all the diadems of life will confer, unmixed with the rue and the rosemary which tend their poison with all the roses of time, a crown of life, the unfading and the unpoisoning asphodel of the eternal plains.

E. P. H.

CLXXXIX. True Church Life. REV. iii. 1. "*I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.*"

THE Church to whom this statement was made was that of Sardis, and the remarkable thing is that this strong condemnation is pronounced while yet no flagrant vices are charged upon its members. They appear to have been sound in creed, and respectable in conduct, yet after all they were dead.

I. There are certain things which secure for a Church a good name, which yet are no sure indications of spiritual life.

1. Numbers may give a name to live while yet there may be death.

2. Wealth may give a name to live.

3. The absence of immoral conduct is no sure indication of life.

4. A sound creed is no indication of a Church's life because it may have been departed from, or a Church may put the creed in place of the Saviour, or its members may have gone soundly to sleep upon its sound creed.

II. A sure indication of life is the fruit. "I know thy works." The threefold test of a Church's life is

1. Works of faith.

2. Works of love.

3. The patience of hope.

The patience of hope is the work of hope. "If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. This patience is not simply quiet waiting, it is also active perseverance. Hope is the mainspring of effort, and a hopeful Church will be a persevering Church, with no such word as weariness in its vocabulary.

W. M. T.

CCXC. The Conqueror. REV. VI. 2. "*And I saw, and behold a white horse: and He that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto Him: and He went forth conquering and to conquer.*"

BEHOLD the combat beyond all others important, the combat between Christ and Satan for the human soul.

I. First the cause of strife, the soul. A colony of heaven had been taken by the powers of hell, and the effort to restore it to allegiance was the main cause of this celestial war.

The domination of Satan over the human soul is despotic, degrading, and destructive.

II. Look at the battle. The Divine Saviour stronger than the strong man armed as our champion. The first grapple seems to have been the temptation in the wilderness, the next in the performance of miracles, the next the death grapple, the last the rising from the dead and ascension into heaven.

III. The victory that He gained. It was complete, it was benevolent, it was unchanging.

The attack which the Saviour made upon the enemy was such as to tear away the very source and energies of his power. In the time of the Lord's victory we do not see traces of carnage, nor hear orphans wailing the dead; but a voice breathes the comfortable word, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain." The triumphs of the Saviour brighten with the lapse of time. Time cannot tarnish their lustre, nor death itself destroy.

W. M. P.

CCXCI. The Everlasting Gospel. REV. xiv. 6.

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."

I. THE Gospel is the unchanging, the unfailing, and the only remedy for the wants and the woes of man. Philosophy and civilization have failed. The Gospel has been tried and succeeded.

II. It is the business of the Church to preach this Gospel. God's plan is not to do things most rapidly, but to do them in the best way. Our labours are not a terrible burden. We should feel about them as Paul does when he says, "Unto me is this grace given." Nothing will ever supersede the institution of preaching, and if the world is to be stirred to the core of its heart, it must be by living men.

III. It is the individual duty of every member of the Church to take what part he is able in this great work. Do not be cheated; you cannot get out of individuality by merging yourself in a corporation. Can you bear that the loved name of Jesus should be unknown, unhonoured, and unsung by the millions of the world? Do you not remember the commandment, "Love thy neighbour as thyself"? Do you forget what others have done and suffered?

S. C.

CCXCII. The Blessed Dead. **REV. xiv. 13.** *"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."*

NO book is fuller than this Apocalypse of the struggles and victories of the Church on earth; but it also opens a door into heaven. It shows that heaven is not all future, but, as it were, contemporary with present history, and bound to it by the closest ties. Messengers pass and re-pass; tidings come and go; and the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, presides alike over time and eternity.

I. The answer which the text gives to the question, How is the heavenly blessedness attested? We all profess to believe in the reality of heaven, but why?

1. There is the evidence from miracle or the presence of the supernatural in the form of power. This great apostle heard a voice from heaven. But before this John had looked on One whose life was crowded with miracle. He had witnessed His risen glory as He came back from heaven, and His ascension glory as He returned to heaven. If miracle could vouch for heaven, its existence was confirmed.

2. The testimony is in itself divinely credible. Its internal character vouches for its authority.

3. There is a living and experimental evidence of the reality of heaven. It is written in living epistles, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.

II. How is the heavenly blessedness secured?

1. The doctrine here is that the title to heaven depends on faith. "In the Lord."

2. But there is also a preparation for the heavenly state by holy obedience. "They rest from their labours," implying that they prove their faith by works.

III. How is the heavenly blessedness enjoyed?

1. Heaven is the rest of the worker. It is not sloth, torpor, or inactivity; but while there is no apathy there is rest to the body and the spirit. No more out in the billows, toiling in rowing, when the wind is contrary, but in smooth water, and with the ripple breaking on the shore.

2. Heaven is the continued influence of the work. "Their works do follow them." Every moral act, truly good, will last for ever. The simplest act of self-denial for Christ's sake, the mother's faintest prayer, record themselves in the sounding-board of eternity, and never die away.

J. C.

CCXCIII. Moses and the Lamb. REV. xv. 3. "*And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.*"

I. THAT song indicates that man is co-operator with God in the work of redemption. This is the vast difference between the old creation and the new.

II. It implies, further, that the salvation of these redeemed has been the result of judgment and mercy, destroying power and saving love.

The song vindicates all the conduct of God to the redeemed in this world.

III. The song of the redeemed in glory unites into one Divine harmony all the dispensations under which mankind have been trained for eternal life.

H. M.

CCXCIV. The Crowned Christ. REV. xix. 12. "*On His head were many crowns.*"

THIS was a symbolic revelation of the extent and variety of the kingdoms over which Christ rules.

I. In times of deep religious earnestness the very intensity of men's desire to serve Christ perfectly often makes them forget the actual service to which He has appointed them. The first impulse of some persons, when they begin to be in real earnest about serving Christ, is to look at a great part of their life from sorrow as alienated from His service. Remember that on the head of Christ are many crowns, that all occupations of human life are His, and that every one who desires to serve Him can give Him not fragments, but the whole of life from first to last. You need not give up trade, if it is an honest one, to serve

Christ. Serve Him in the trade itself, and remember that in trade, as in everything besides, He is King.

II. And He is the King of the province of public life too, and in politics, whether imperial or local, Christian men should still be serving and honouring Him. Christ is the King of our political life, and in that, as in every other province of our activity, we have to serve and honour Him.

III. Christ is King of the spiritual life of man. Much of the weakness and sorrow of Christian people arise from forgetting this—we have to give Him reverence as well as trust, fear as well as love. We have to recognise His authority. The awe and devout fear with which we bow down before God are His, for He is God manifest in the flesh.

R. W. D.

CCXCV. A New Creation. REV. xxi. 5. *"He that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new."*

I. A NEW creation. "I make." That is a Divine word. "I make all things." That also is Divine. "I make all things new." That reaches the highest stage.

To make all things new Christ has made a new covenant.

He has also made us new men.

Man is now new in relationship.

II. Adore this great Regenerator.

The dolorous pain of the Maker was the world's new making—the travail of His soul.

The world is new made through the truths which He promulgated.

Also by the giving of the Holy Ghost.

Also by the work of Christ on high.

III. Behold and believe.

You need perhaps to be made new. He can make you new.

Do your friends need to be made new? Entertain no doubt of the power of Christ.

C. H. S.

CCXCVI. The Nation. REV. xxi. 24. "*The nations of of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.*"

THROUGHOUT the Bible a clear and most instructive distinction is drawn between the chosen people of Israel and the nations. In this vision the Church and the nations are one in the open presence of God. Meanwhile there are for the nations separate works. Let me remind you of some features in the nature and obligations of national life.

I. The idea of the nation is, like the idea of the family, involved in the very constitution of man. There is something within us which impels us to a companion beyond the limits of our own kindred.

II. We are, as citizens of a nation, debtors of an incalculable past. What we are, what we can be, has been determined for us in great measure by our English ancestors. We hold in trust for our fellow-men and for our fellow nations treasures of untold price. Let us resolve to transmit what we have received, purified by new victories of self-control, extended by new triumphs of sympathy, to those who shall follow us.

III. To do so we must ponder the laws and constitution of national life, we must bear in mind three principles—of dependence, of authority, of equality; and be assured that in the nation we are swayed by their salutary influence.

B. F. W.

CCXCVII. The End of the Curse. REV. xxii. 3.
"*And there shall be no more curse.*"

THUS the book closes where it begins. We have got back to Eden at last; very long has been the wandering of the sad human family, but the end is reached now. From that hour when the glare of the red sword of the seraph waved its fierce light over the wilderness, what a dreadful way the world has passed.

I. Let us attempt to realize what is implied in the curse.

It is visible. Man has marks of great gifts and great attainments which neither belong to the clay nor to the beast; but there, in the heraldry of our race is the bar

sinister, which darkens the hatchment and scowls on the escutcheon.

The curse is there. There is a malignant power in the world, a malevolent influence. Can you belong to the city and not believe that?

Mark again how it reigns. The rigour of the curse is the rigour of the law; it is the rigour of tribulation and anguish.

Then there is the curse of the flint, the curse of a hard heart. Oh! the stony hearts you meet with in this world! Oh! the hearts on which it seems as if all the dews of the kindest heavens might rain, and never produce a single grain for the harvest!

Then there is the curse of the spear—pain, cancers for the body, breaking for the heart.

Then there is the curse of the soil—curse of the thorn and the weed. Labour has very little dignified enjoyment now.

So it is not a happy world.

II. The removal of the curse. Christ is the great power of God. He was a supernatural means of Divine mercy. The world of evil and spiritual agencies pressed hard on Him, but He was, through it all, able to open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Christ, in the fulness of His Divine power was made a curse for us. He would not have come if the world, in its condition of suffering, simply expresses the will of God.

What joy when the race of souls return to their home and allegiance like weary birds returning to their nest! No more curse! Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.

E. P. H.

CCXCVIII. The Future Life. REV. xxii. 3, 4. "*His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face.*"

THE great cardinal doctrine which sums up the hopes and assurances of faith, is the doctrine of a future life as revealed in the Gospel.

I. This doctrine may be broken into three parts.

1. Our own consciousness assures us of personal identity. The man recognises the unity that binds him to his child-

hood. He may wander far, but he drags at each remove a lengthening chain. Lord Macaulay tells of Warren Hastings, when a child of seven, dreaming of a scheme never abandoned through all his life, of recovering the estate that had belonged to his father.

2. The next great factor is spirituality. Our personality is spiritual in nature.

3. The third portion is our belief in individual immortality, the evidence for which is twofold: the anticipations of man, and the revelation of God.

II. Consider the reasons which justify us in looking forward to the life of eternity as a life in which the fullest activities of a transfigured soul avail themselves of the heightened and multiplied resources of a glorified body.

1. Our bodies will be glorified, and it is a fair inference that our lives will be glorified in proportion.

2. The resurrection of Christ proves that we carry through the gates of death the perfection of every quality, capacity, and faculty we have possessed in the present life.

3. We may expect that eternity will furnish us with just those duties which the discipline of this life has trained us to discharge.

III. The church life finds its consummation in the knowledge and worship of God; in that beatific vision which is the highest term of the promises of Scripture; the grand hope and object of the saintly life in every age.

Even in this life the worship of the sanctuary is the most direct preparation for heaven.

J. H.

CCXCIX. The Vision of God. Rev. xxii. 4. "*And they shall see His face.*"

THE vision of God is threefold—the vision of righteousness, the vision of grace, the vision of glory.

I. Righteousness includes all those attributes which make up an idea of the Supreme Ruler of the universe. Perfect justice, perfect truth, perfect purity, perfect moral harmony in all its aspects. It is a vision of awe, transcending all thought. A vision of awe, but a vision also of purification, of renewal, of energy, of power, of life.

II. The vision of righteousness is succeeded by the vision of grace. When Butler in his dying moments had expressed his awe at appearing face to face before the moral Governor of the world, his chaplain, we are told, spoke to him of the blood that cleanseth from all sin. "Ah, this is comfortable," he replied; and with these words on his lips he gave up his soul to God. He only has access to eternal love who has stood face to face with eternal righteousness. The incarnation of the Son is the mirror of his Father's love.

III. The mirror of love melts into the vision of glory. Here we catch only glimpses at rare intervals revealed in the lives of God's saints and heroes, revealed, above all, in the record of the written word and in the incarnation of the Divine Son. There we shall see Him face to face, perfect truth, perfect righteousness, perfect purity, perfect love, perfect light; and we shall gaze with unblenching eye and our visage shall be changed.

J. B. L.

CCC. The Unchangeable State. REV. xxii. 11.

"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

THE emphatic word in this text is the word *still*. We are conscious of an unfathomable depth in it. It seems to run along the line of immortality.

These are the words of Christ.

I. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ knows the human race individually. He knows every man. Such knowledge is of course beyond all men, beyond all angels and devils, and can be perfect only in God. We do not know ourselves. He takes nothing upon testimony or in parts; He has our life before Him as a perfect whole, and *sees* all. Hence He has no suspicions against you. How foolish is the hypocrite who exerts himself to deceive others when the eye of God is upon him.

II. Jesus Christ discriminates character to the finest shades. There are immense varieties in the human con-

stitution and form, and these represent varieties of inner character—varieties of spiritual constitution and development.

Here Jesus classes mankind into four divisions. There are endless varieties, but none so minute as to escape Him.

III. At the right time Jesus Christ will seal every character. The day will come when all remedial dispensations will cease. The day will come when God's Spirit will have fulfilled His mission, and He will not again strive with man. In that day our Saviour will shut up the evil to evil and with evil, and pavilion the righteous in His strong habitation in that sanctuary yonder—the veil of which has been rent for us. In that holy of holies He will shut in the righteous *to* all good, and *with* all good.

S. M.

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